THE HUMANE MEDIEVALIST:
A STUDY OF C. S. LEWIS' CRITICISM OF MEDIEVAL LITERATURE

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The Four Loves
Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer
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PREFACE

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I. INTRODUCTION

In a time when the world is becoming increasingly mechanized and oriented toward the future, C. S. Lewis spent his energies revitalizing the former time of the medieval world and its literature. Medieval literature became for Lewis a rich source of humaneness and an object for his critical acumen. To the literature of this era, Lewis brought the refreshing combination of a mind alive with humor and common sense and trained in the classics. His critical response is characterized by verve and honesty and, above all, is the humane response of one whose life combined bookishness and vitality.

In the university atmosphere, first, of Oxford, and, subsequently, of Cambridge, Lewis found enough books and friends to fill a lifetime. From 1925 until 1954 he was a Reader in English Literature at Oxford whose religious writings sometimes occasioned a raised eyebrow among his confrères. The publication of his first major book of medievalia in 1936, The Allegory of Love, won for him the Hawthorndon Literary Prize and the wide esteem he has retained to this day. His lectures, Prolegomena to Medieval and Renaissance Literature, were, by written and spoken testimony, events of high interest and acclaim. In 1954 he accepted the offer of a new chair at Cambridge University, Professor of Mediaeval and Renaissance English. Dr. G. M. Trevelyn, on the

occasion of Lewis' inaugural lecture, "De Descriptione Temporum," noted in his introductory remarks that ". . . this was the only university appointment in the whole of his experience [as Master of Trinity College] for which the electing committee had voted unanimously."[1] Since Lewis' death in November of 1963, his brother, W. H. Lewis, and his secretary, Walter Hooper, have been responsible for the publication of the remaining papers of medieval criticism, The Discarded Image in 1964 and Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature in 1966.

An interest in medieval literature permeated Lewis' life and writing. Besides the four books devoted specifically to the medieval model and its literary art, Lewis' autobiographical, religious, and creative works also belong, at least marginally, to the body of medieval criticism. In the considerations which follow, therefore, I shall approach Lewis' contribution to medieval studies by using all of his writings which have been published to date. His earlier views are sometimes modified in later works; I shall point out these developing relationships in the total body of Lewis' works.

Throughout a recently-published volume of his letters, Lewis approaches medieval literature in a characteristic variety of moods. His description of initiation into Old English goes to the heart of the humor and the trouble. He writes that

> Anglo-Saxon is great fun. One begins it in a Reader constructed on the admirable system of having nearly all the text in one dialect and nearly all the glossary in another. You can imagine what happy hours this gives the young student. . . . I spend most of my hours with her [his tutor] trying to reproduce the various clucking, growling, and grunted noises which are apparently an essential to the pure accent of Alfred. . . .[2]

His last published letter of October 27, 1963, echoes the theme of mutability so prevalent in much medieval poetry: "Yes, autumn is really the best of the seasons and I'm not sure that old age isn't the best part of life. But of course, like autumn, it doesn't last."[3] The letters very often serve also as a more direct commentary on Lewis' writings; his answers to questioners and critics are in this category.

Lewis, as a lay-theologian, felt more affinities for the traditional brand of Christianity, the heritage of medieval orthodoxy, than for the modern theology of Bultmann and Teillard de Chardin. An appreciation of his insights into medieval literature is enriched by a reading of his religious writings which themselves draw heavily from medieval sources.

As a creative writer also, Lewis was quick to incorporate and transform the genres, themes, and images of the earlier era. His science fiction novel, That Hideous Strength, reaches its fulfillment when its hero raises memories of Le Roman de la Rose:

> And he had taken blackguardly advantage of that noble error in her judgment; had behaved as if here /he were/ native to that fenced garden and even its natural possessor.
>
> All this, which should have been uneasy joy, was torment to him, for it came too late. He was discovering the hedge after he had plucked the rose, and not only plucked it but torn it all to pieces and crumbled it with hot, thumb-like greedy fingers. How had he dared?[4]

The Narnia tales for children are replete with symbolism borrowed from the beast allegories of medieval times. In these and in the books devoted to general literary topics, for example, in Studies in Words and An Experiment in Criticism, Lewis' knowledge and interest in the literature of medieval times controls and directs the critical intellect.

C. S. Lewis has earned a reputation as a critic of medieval literature who is both engaging and perceptive. In this study I shall describe several recurring themes of Lewis' criticism in an effort to show that his contribution to the revival of medieval studies in the twentieth century is not only enjoyable but also important.

Notes to Chapter I

[1]W. H. Lewis, "Memoir of C. S. Lewis," in Letters of C. S. Lewis: Edited, with a Memoir by W. H. Lewis (London, 1966), p. 22.

[2]Since there is no collected edition of the works of C. S. Lewis, the volumes referred to in this study will be the editions available here. In most cases this will be an edition published in the United States; but for books not yet available in this country, I have used the British edition.

Recently, several new collections of Lewis' articles and stories have appeared; some articles which were previously available only in periodicals are collected in these books. My footnote references will be to the published book form of the articles rather than to the original periodical appearance, since the latter may be difficult to obtain. Furthermore, in some works by Lewis, essays, stories, or sermons are repeated from one volume to another. My references to any of these will be consistently to the same source.

Letters, p. 82.

[3]Letters, p. 308.

[4]New York, 1965, p. 381.

II. THE MEDIEVAL MODEL

In an allegorical narrative written early in his career, The Pilgrim's Regress of 1933, C. S. Lewis describes the plight of modern man caught in the blind spirit of the age, Zeitgeistheim, and without recourse to reason or a sense of history. When the pilgrim hero John was imprisoned, he became

> . . . like a terrified child and put his hands over his eyes not to see the giant; but young Mr. Enlightenment tore his hands away and forced his face round and made him see the Spirit of the Age where it sat like one of the stone giants, the size of a mountain, with its eyes shut. Then Mr. Enlightenment opened a little door among the rocks and flung John into a pit made in the side of a hill, just opposite the giant, so that the giant could look into it through its gratings.[1]

John's captured state is unchanged until he is rescued by Lady Reason, the giant slayer, who unmasks the Spirit of the Age and ". . . Reason set spurs in her stallion and it leaped up on to the giant's mossy knees and galloped up his foreleg, till she plunged her sword into his heart. Then there was a noise and a crumbling like a landslide and the huge carcass settled down and the Spirit of the Age became what he had seemed to be at first, a sprawling hummock of rock."[2] Lewis' early allegory reveals a basic preoccupation developed more fully in his later works of literary criticism, the necessity of freeing oneself from the bonds of the spirit of the modern age by acquiring a sense of history. Before I begin a

discussion of Lewis' contribution to the idea of the medieval universe, which is the result of his sense of history and which also is the main focus of this chapter, it seems necessary to discuss briefly in the section that follows some of his more general remarks on the nature and importance of literary studies.

In his first major work of medieval literary criticism, The Allegory of Love, Lewis acknowledged a debt to Owen Barfield, who ". . . has taught me not to patronize the past, and has trained me to see the present as itself a 'period'."[3] The past which most concerned Lewis was the lost medieval world as it affects our reading of literature. Recognizing the necessity and hazards inherent in reconstructing this world view, or the "medieval model" as he came to call it, Lewis encouraged direct contact with the sources of the view, old books. He wrote that each ". . . age has its own outlook. It is specially good at seeing certain truths and specially liable to make certain mistakes. We all, therefore, need the books that will correct the characteristic mistakes of our own period. And this means the old books. . . . The only palliative is to keep the clean sea breeze of the centuries blowing through our minds and this can be done by reading old books."[4] But the reading of older literature demands a special kind of voyageur; for we can, in Lewis' phrase, travel through older literature as a man who ". . . carries

his Englishry abroad with him and brings it home unchanged."[5] The ideal reader of literature, on the other hand, is the traveler who sees "the foreign country as it looks, not to the tourist, but to its inhabitants."[6] Such a person will not retreat into the past for a reaffirmation of modern assumptions, but will seek there points of view which sometimes differ sharply with the established modern attitude.

It is profitable, in this regard, to consider Lewis' remarks on good readers in An Experiment in Criticism. He "experiments" by judging books by their readers: good readers are those who are receptive, who lay themselves open to books; bad readers are those who use books as a starter for imaginative and emotional activities of their own. Lewis writes that

> Literary experience heals the wounds, without undermining the privilege, of individuality. . . . But in reading great literature I become a thousand men and yet remain myself. Like the night sky in the Greek poem, I see with a myriad eyes, but it is still I who see. Here, as in worship, in love, in moral action, and in knowing, I transcend myself; and am never more myself than when I do.[7]

Thus, the ideal reader, as Lewis describes him, maintains a receptivity to the past in literature, unblocked by any predisposition in favor of himself or his modernity.

So convinced was Lewis of the necessity for a sense of the past that he frequently returns to this theme both in his lectures devoted to the "medieval model" and

in essays of a more general nature. When Lewis wrote a defense of the humanistic benefits of literary history, he stressed the importance of knowing the ethos behind even the bad poems.[8] A proposed change in the English syllabus of Oxford University elicited from Lewis a classic statement of the idea of literature:

> The true aim of literary studies is to lift the student out of his provincialism by making him the "spectator," if not of all, yet of much, "time and existence." The student, or even the schoolboy, who has been brought to meet the past where alone the past still lives, is taken out of the narrowness of his own age and class into a more public world. He is learning the true Phaenomenologie des Geistes: discovering what varieties there are in Man.[9]

Writing as a scholar and a teacher, Lewis never lost sight of this genuinely humanistic view of literary study.

In his capacity as a professional scholar among scholars, as a reviewer for Medium Aevum, Lewis was quick to sense the total or partial lack of a sense of period in any book offered for his comments. He censures the author of Three Estates in Medieval and Renaissance Literature for her lack of ". . . qualifications for a sympathetic reconstruction of the past."[10] Similarly, although he generally praises another book on a favorite topic, the Romance of the Rose, he maintains that Jean de Meun's method is perhaps more allied to "mediaeval habits of composition" and less akin to the "modern symboliste."[11] If these lapses into the "pan-modernist"

method are made by professional medieval scholars, how much more must the student need the guidance of the "medieval model" which Lewis attempts to provide.

The historian is subject to certain erroneous notions also, in his researches into the past. In "Historicism," an article published originally in the English Catholic journal The Month, Lewis points out the general dangers inherent in attempting to discover an inner meaning in history. One of these is the attempt to say what the past means when we have not yet the end of the story. Lewis maintains that the ". . . mark of the Historicist, . . . is that he tries to get from historical premises conclusions which are more than historical; conclusions metaphysical or theological or (to coin a word) atheo-logical."[12] As an historian of literature himself, Lewis is conscious of this danger. His one-volume contribution to the Oxford History of English Literature is introduced by a warning in this vein. "Some think it the historian's business to penetrate beyond this apparent confusion and heterogeneity, and to grasp in a single intuition the 'spirit' or 'meaning' of his period. With some hesitation, and with much respect for the great men who have thought otherwise, I submit that this is exactly what we must refrain from doing."[13] Instead, we must try to reconstruct the past imaginatively from the known historical facts. With this advice in mind, I shall

proceed to the main subject of this chapter, Lewis' reconstruction of the "medieval model."

The choice of the word "model" to describe the universe as it seemed to men of the Middle Ages is itself significant of Lewis' method of scholarship. The "medieval model" was built by him from odd literary hints, reinforced by the stronger ties of prolonged contact with the primary sources. The model is then primarily a bookish one, both because he reconstructs it from books and, more importantly, because he demonstrates that its sources <u>are</u> in old books.

Lewis described his method of building this model in a letter to an American nun, Sister Madeleva. Although he is speaking here only about the model as represented in the Oxford Prolegomena lectures (and thus, ultimately, in <u>The Discarded Image</u>), the method is illustrated in other works as well. Lewis begins by describing his model as induced by the vicissitudes of literature:

> After having worked for some years on my own subject (wh. is the medieval allegory) I found that I had accumulated a certain amount of general information, ... There were however several gaps in the general knowledge which I had accidentally got. To fill these up, I adopted the simple method of going through Skeat's notes on Chaucer and Langland, and other similar things, and following these up to their sources when they touched on matters which seemed to me important. . . . In fine, the process is inductive for the most part of my lectures: tho' on allegory, courtly love, and (sometimes) on philosophy, it is deductive--i.e. I <u>start</u> from the authors I quote.[14]

He concludes his description by reasserting the primacy of the classics in medieval studies, and adds finally The Divine Comedy, the Romance of the Rose and some general advice about scholastic philosophy.[15]

With this description of Lewis' development in mind, it is interesting to follow him as he points out a similar path for students. Several years before his retirement, he began a new book of which he completed only the introductory chapter, "De Audiendis Poetis."[16] Directing his reader's attention to the language difficulties of the fourteenth-century romance Sir Orfeo and to the aesthetic meaning of space in Pearl, Lewis demonstrates the necessity for knowledge of his "bookish" universe. The danger for the reader is that he may fail to recognize that "In the language of the old poets it is not the obviously 'hard' words that betray us; it is the seemingly easy words which will make sense (but not the sense the poet intended) if we take them in their modern meanings."[17] From these sources and for these reasons, Lewis bids his readers watch as he rebuilds for them the discarded medieval image.

Initially, it is important to notice again the sources and purpose of Lewis' reconstruction. He builds from books for readers of old books. While this may seem to be the natural course of events, it is evident that some contemporary scholars of medieval literature are

relinquishing their dependence on written literary texts and relying more and more on anthropological knowledge and the visual arts.[18] Following in the footsteps of such critics as W. P. Ker and John Livingston Lowes, Lewis presented to his readers that part of medieval culture which lay in books. As his successor in the chair of Mediaeval and Renaissance English at Cambridge University, J. A. W. Bennett, described him in this regard, "Lewis, then in medieval studies, was not so much a pioneer as the latest and greatest of a line."[19]

The medieval universe which Lewis reconstructed was built from the ". . . real, or supposed, agreement of any ancient authors--good or bad, philosophers or poets, understood or misunderstood--who happened, for whatever reason, to be available."[20] Therefore, its roots were in the extant manuscripts. Plato, for the Middle Ages, was the author of the Timaeus, not of the Republic.[21]

Although a primary quality of the medieval ethos was its reliance on manuscripts, Lewis admits that it was not uninfluenced by the colliding barbarian worlds. But, according to the point of view and the country from which one assesses the contribution of these worlds, the resulting estimate of their importance may differ drastically. Linguistically, their contribution is essential, Lewis asserts, especially in Middle English literature,

"Those who ignore the relation of English to Anglo-Saxon as a 'merely philological fact' irrelevant to the literature betray a shocking insensibility to the very mode in which literature exists."[22] Nevertheless, it can still be maintained that for knowledge of the way medieval men constructed their picture of and response to the universe, it is to the old books that we must turn. In these books, "For one reference to Wade or Weland we meet fifty to Hector, Aeneas, Alexander, or Caesar. For one probable relic of Celtic religion dug out of a medieval book we meet, clear and emphatic, a score of references to Mars and Venus and Diana."[23] Contrary to the popular image of medieval man as a victim of superstition, Lewis presents him as a victim of books.

Herein lies a difficulty. Men of the Middle Ages were, in a very real sense, victims of books, for so credulous were they of everything contained there that they found ". . . it hard to believe that anything an old _auctour_ has said is simply untrue."[24] But, the resulting conflict between their authorities did not mar their faith; instead it increased the challenge. They believed that ". . . if Seneca and St. Paul disagreed with one another, and both with Cicero, and all these with Boethius, there must be some explanation which would harmonize them. What was not true literally might be true in some other sense; what was false _simpliciter_ might be true _secundum quid_.

And so on through every possible subtlety and ramification."[25] The syntheses of Thomism and Dante and, above all, of the "medieval model" itself are the issues of this habit of mind.

Lewis' impatience with the terms "humanism" and "Renaissance" are openly stated in his book English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama.[26] Nevertheless, it is because of his rehabilitation of the humanists at Chartres during the twelfth century that he himself has been posthumously honored as a humanist.[27] Thus, it seems appropriate to illustrate the "bookish" development of the "medieval model" by tracing with Lewis the origin and course of a seminal concept in the model which was the special gift of the school of Chartres, the concept of Nature. Lewis' repeated emphasis on the influence of Nature in the model warrants this selection.[28]

At the outset, Lewis makes it clear that the Nature of his discussions is not the product of a primitive mythopoetic mind which has pictured the relation between Father Sky and Mother Earth in a sexual image suggesting procreation. On the contrary, Nature as she appears in the works of the poets of Chartres, Bernadus Silvestris and Alanus ab Insulis, is the product of an intellectual culture, the result of a process of abstraction. Nature is the personification of the sum of all the creative tendencies in the sub-lunar universe, subject to the power of

the Divine Creator and herself a creature. Lewis maintains that it is this contingency which gave her life. "It is precisely this limitation and subordination of Nature which sets her free for her triumphant career. By surrendering the dull claim to be everything, she becomes somebody. Yet all the while she is, for the medievals, only a personification. A figurative being on these terms is apparently more potent than a deity really believed in who, by being all things, is almost nothing."[29] To find the origin of this personification we must turn to the ancients.

Although Plato's Timaeus was available in the Middle Ages, in the translation of Chalcidius, it was not here that men of that time found a major source for their concept of Nature. Rather, it was contained in scanty references in later Latin writers, Claudian and Statius. Lewis concentrates his attention on Statius, building from the importance which Dante gave to him in the Comedy (Purgatorio, XXI, 91). In the Thebaid, the medieval concept of Natura already was begun as a princeps and creatrix (XI, 466). The fructifying personification of Nature as creator would, of course, have to be tempered in the Christian medieval picture, but at least the material for the later concept was present. From Claudian the builders of the "medieval model" took the ordering function of Nature. "She is," Lewis writes, "the demiurge who reduced

primeval chaos to cosmos (De Raptu Proserpinae, I, 249); she appointed the gods to serve Jupiter (De IVº Consulatu Honorii, 198 sq.); more memorably, she sits, aged yet beautiful, before the cavern of Aevum in the De Consulatu Stilichonis (II, 424 sp.)."[30] It was from these scanty classical references that medieval poets were to fashion Nature as the ordering ruler of creation under the moon and ultimately subject to the power of God.

Chronologically, the first important medieval poet to develop these hints from Statius and Claudian was Bernardus Sylvestris in whose work De Mundi Universitate sive Magacosmus et Microcosmus Nature appears ". . . not to be corrected by Grace but as the goddess and the vicaria of God, herself correcting the unnatural." For Bernardus, Nature ". . . is the personification of the general order of things, in the largest sense, and has a wider field of action than we should ordinarily attribute to 'nature'."[31]

Next in the line of "bookish" innovators and perpetuators of Nature is the poet Alanus ab Insulis, whose Latin philosophical poem De Planctu Naturae qualifies him for consideration here. With what Lewis has described as hot-house excess in style, Alanus places the virgin Nature in a rich scene of vegetative growth and beauty. It was this goddess in all her "ordered exuberance" who became a favorite subject of vernacular

poets of the Middle Ages. Lewis traces her ancestry back to Alanus from the numinous Nature of Spenser, to the genial but sometimes solemn Nature of Chaucer's Parlement, to the sturdy and turbulent goddess of Deguileville's Pelerinage, and finally to the energetic, purposeful and beautiful goddess of Jean de Meun's continuation of the Romance of the Rose.[32] With Jean, we are but one step removed from Alanus. The development of Natura with her many emphases and variations illustrates well the reliance of medieval man upon the "bookish" material available in the process of building up his picture of the universe.

Before passing on to a discussion of the second primary characteristic of the "medieval model," its hierarchic order, it would be well to consider first one result of its dependence upon books. Lewis has variously termed this result the theory of composite authorship or "touching up an old author." His description of an imaginary dialogue with Laȝamon or Chaucer on this subject is both instructive and humorous. "If you had asked Laȝamon or Chaucer 'Why do you not make up a brand-new story of your own?' I think they might have replied (in effect) 'Surely we are not reduced to that?' Spin something out of one's own head when the world teems with so many noble deeds, wholesome examples, pitiful tragedies, strange adventures, and merry jests which have never yet

been set forth quite so well as they deserve?"[33] Riches were there for the taking, for the medieval author, in the traditional tales found in old books.

Lewis' description of the resulting literary work stresses consideration of the work not the artist. In an early letter written during a visit to Salisbury, he makes a comparison which he was to use in his later literary criticism. He notes the difference between the cathedrals of Wells or Winchester and that of Salisbury. "One feels the people behind them [Wells and Winchester] more; the nameless craftsmen in this or that gargoyle which is different from any other. Salisbury, on the other hand, is the idea of a master mind, struck out at once for ever. . . . One might say that Wells is an age made into stone and Salisbury is a petrified moment."[34] It is the image of Wells as the work of many ages and artists which Lewis was to employ over and over again. Laȝamon, Chaucer, and Malory in their respective treatments of old stories are as artists contributing to medieval cathedrals and must not be considered as personal artists apart from the continuing literary tradition or "matter."[35] In both of his extended treatments of the English prose Morte, Lewis develops this comparison with a cathedral. After paying tribute to the editorial work of Professor Vinaver in The Works of Sir Thomas Malory, he describes the Morte as a

> . . . 'cathedral' of words [which] is so large that everyone can find in it the work of his favorite period; and here, as you could not do in a real cathedral, you can always strip that favorite work of later accretions without pulling the whole thing down. What you must not do is to call these bits 'the' or 'the real' cathedral. . . Though every part of it was made by a man, the whole has rather grown than been made. Such things have a kind of existence that is almost midway between the works of art and those of nature.[36]

Thus, the medieval literary artist transferred into his own practice the dependence upon "bookish" sources which his model implied.

Commentators on the medieval ethos have traditionally stressed its passion for order. Lewis' particular contribution in describing the hierarchic order of the "medieval model" was his stress on the aesthetic and emotional effects that the several features of this order had on the man contemplating them. His explanation is governed by a desire to heighten the imaginative receptivity of readers of medieval literature. He himself was the recipient of an unusual gift by which he was able to project himself backward in time. There he discovered the emotional results of contemplating the hierarchic medieval world; he wished to take his readers back with him.

Lewis' explanations of the order of the discarded image are based on two principles which he traces to their classical sources. The two principles which came to the "medieval model" through the Platonists Apuleius,

Chalcidius, and Pseudo-Dionysius are the principle of the triad and that of plenitude. The first of these as stated in Timaeus reads: "it is impossible that two things only should be joined together without a third."[37] The second principle, that of plenitude, ultimately has a Platonic origin also; as Lewis describes it, very simply it is the belief that "The universe must be fully exploited. Nothing must go to waste."[38] In order to actualize all creative potentialities, God in his goodness has filled our universe with every possible variety of beings, who are therefore all good as reflections of the goodness of the Creator.

This universe, as seen by men of the Middle Ages, was organized by the well-known "architecture," as Lewis calls it, of the Ptolemaic system.

> The central (and spherical) Earth is surrounded by a series of hollow and transparent globes, one above the other, and each of course larger than the one below. These are the 'spheres', 'heavens', or (sometimes) 'elements'. Fixed in each of the first seven spheres is one luminous body. Starting from the Earth, the order is the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn; the 'seven planets'. Beyond the sphere of Saturn is the Stellatum, to which belong all those stars that we still call 'fixed' because their positions relative to one another are, unlike those of the planets, invariable. Beyond the Stellatum there is a sphere called the First Movable or Primum Mobile. . . . The dimensions of the medieval universe are not, even now, so generally realised as its structure; . . . .[39]

Against the popular conception of the Ptolemaic universe being earth-centered, Lewis brings forward testimony from

learned (Cicero, Isidore, and Roger Bacon) and popular (The South English Legendary) sources to demonstrate that the earth's size was recognized to be small both when placed against the other bodies in the heavens and when seen in relation to the total size of the universe.

After making these factual observations, Lewis proceeds to consider a more important matter, "how such a universe must have affected those who believed in it."[40] Seeing the heavens in this old cosmology, we are struck by the sense of height governing all distance. Further, the finite nature of the medieval universe presents an order, even in great distances, which brings aesthetic delight. Lewis contrasts the modern and the medieval man in this regard:

> . . . to look out on the night sky with modern eyes is like looking over a sea that fades away into mist, or looking about one in a trackless forest--trees forever and no horizon. To look up at the towering medieval universe is much more like looking at a great building. The 'space' of modern astronomy may arouse terror, or bewilderment or vague reverie; the spheres of old present us with an object in which the mind can rest, overwhelming in its greatness but satisfying in its harmony.[41]

The resulting medieval response to the Ptolemaic universe is therefore characterized by aesthetic satisfaction and repose.

The universe, set in motion by God through the Primum Mobile, has in each of its spherical bodies a movement toward man, an influence. Lewis delineates the

individual nature of each sphere's influence, but the importance of the idea, influence, has been so dulled by the modern use of the term that readers are warned to reinvest it with its full movement and meaning in any medieval occurrence. Each planet exerted a special power or influence over the actions of men, according to the nature of that planet. For example, Mars induces a warlike disposition in men on earth.

Finally, Lewis adds two more aesthetic responses to the "medieval model," the first to a universe flooded with light, the second to a universe filled with the music of the spheres. In one of his science-fiction novels, Out of the Silent Planet, Lewis gives a full insight into the response of a man suddenly seeing the universe with all its activity and light, the universe, in other words, as it must have seemed to the medieval man. Ranson, on his trip outward to Malcandra (Mars), changes his response to the universe. During the trip he felt,

> A nightmare, long engendered in the modern mind by the mythology that follows in the wake of science, was falling off him. He has read of 'Space': at the back of his thinking for years had lurked the dismal fancy of the black, cold vacuity, the utter deadness, which was supposed to separate the worlds. He had not known how much it affected him till now--now that very name 'Space' seemed a blasphemous libel for this empyrean ocean of radiance in which they swam. He could not call it 'dead'; he felt life pouring into him from it every moment. . . . He had thought it barren: he saw now that it was the womb of worlds, whose blazing and innumerable offspring looked down nightly even upon the earth with so many eyes. . . .

> No: Space was the wrong name. Older thinkers had been wiser when they named it simply the heavens-- . . . .[42]

Lewis has captured here a response to the universe of light and movement which was that of medieval man.

When describing the non-human inhabitants of the universe, Lewis uses both theological and literary sources for a view of the special class of angelic powers, the Intelligences. The circular (and therefore perfect, medieval) movement of each sphere was accomplished by the somewhat ambiguous residence therein of these lofty creatures. Besides these non-human beings there are others, the nine choirs of angels arranged in triads to be intermediaries between the lower choirs and the higher and between man and God.[43]

Lewis' contemplation of the aesthetic effect of the medieval universe, teeming now with life as well as light and movement, is again directed toward an imaginative sympathy with the past for his readers. He notes,

> Whatever else a modern feels when he looks at the night sky, he certainly feels that he is looking <u>out</u>-- . . . . But if you accepted the Medieval Model you would feel like one looking <u>in</u>. The Earth is 'outside the city wall.' When the sun is up he dazzles us and we cannot see inside. Darkness, our own darkness, draws the veil and we catch a glimpse of the high pomps within; the vast, lighted concavity filled with music and life. And, looking in, we do not see, like Meredith's Lucifer, 'the army of unalterable law', but rather the revelry of insatiable love.[44]

The "medieval model" in Lewis' description is beginning

to attain to the fullness demanded by the Platonic principle of plenitude.

It might be well to consider further the aesthetic result of the earth's position in the model. The earth was the lowest sphere, cut off by the darkness in the aether beneath the moon from the "high pomps" inside the wall made by the path of the moon. The Platonic tendency to regard the earth as an image of the Divine is obviously operative here. Lewis maintains that, contrary to the modern suspicion that medieval religion was anthropomorphic, ". . . they [medieval men] thought it was the other way round. They thought that the ecclesiastical hierarchy and the social hierarchy on Earth were dim reproductions of the celestial hierarchies. The pageantry and ceremony which they indulged in to the utmost of their power were their attempt to indicate the modus operandi of the universe; to live, in that sense, 'according to nature'."[45] Here again we find Lewis' assertion of the non-primitive nature of medieval culture. Instead it was based on a long tradition of knowledge about the universe and handed on by books. The effort to enter again into that imagined "medieval model" with his reader is Lewis' special contribution toward an aesthetic appreciation of that universe.

In his discussion of the human inhabitants of the earth, Lewis used again the principle of the triad. He traverses the familiar distinctions of the scholastic

commentaries on the triple powers and the triple soul of man. "Ethically, [concerning the powers of man], the triad is Reason, Emotion, and Appetite. . . . On the psychological level, [concerning the soul of man] the individual triad depends on the doctrine of the triple soul."[46] The rational or highest soul controls both the sensitive by which man responds to stimuli and the vegetative soul by which growth as an activity is possible. Here Lewis extends the triadic principle to point out that man is also the patient (receiving member) of other triads, of the air and its influences and of the lowest choir of angels, each of which agents is itself a member of a triad. These illustrations of the multiplicity and harmony of man as a creature in the universe reinforce the reader's earlier response to a model in which order itself was a work of art meriting esteem.

Lewis stressed throughout his reconstruction that the "medieval model" was a made object, almost a product of art. But he also discovered in that ethos an outlet for the less orderly tendency of art, the tendency that found expression in the belief in Longaevi or longlivers, as he called them. "They are marginal, fugitive creatures. They are perhaps the only creatures to whom the Model does not assign, as it were, an official status. Herein lies their imaginative value. They intrude a welcome hint of wildness and uncertainty into a universe that is in danger

of being a little too self-explanatory, too luminous."[47] Of these creatures, we can know little for certain. Authors differ about their size, their virtue (or lack of it), their corporality, their work--in fact, in just about every area. A definitive list of these creatures might include such companions as fairies, nymphs, fauns, elves, sylphs, devilish spirits, and ghosts. It is evident from such a list that no one description, except perhaps non-human, mortal spirits, will fit these creatures. Lewis' remark that, "As long as the Fairies remained at all they remained evasive," seems an apt description of the romantic elusiveness which they added to the classically ordered "medieval model."[48]

Flowing from and dependent upon the hierarchic order of the discarded image is the last important characteristic of Lewis' medieval universe, the doctrine of objective value. This is ". . . the belief that certain attitudes are really true, and others really false, to the kind of thing the universe is and the kind of thing we are."[49] Lewis has established his model as one having a significant order imposed by its Creator, its structure, and its purpose. Therefore, the function of man as artist was not to invest the universe with value but to respond adequately to the value already inherent in the universe.

Such a belief in the objective value of the universe was not opposed to the Platonism or Neo-Platonism of

the Middle Ages. The order of the universe always retained value, for even if it were seen only as an image of a higher order, it had at least that order and meaning. The "medieval model" was in fact constructed upon the Platonic emphasis on triadic order. Instead of opposing his model to Platonism, Lewis contrasts the ancient and medieval objectivity with the modern denial of objective value. He writes that

> . . . a man today often, perhaps usually, feels himself confronted with a reality whose significance he cannot know, or a reality that has no significance, or even a reality such that the very question whether it has a meaning is itself a meaningless question. It is for him, by his own sensibility, to discover a meaning, or, out of his own subjectivity, to give a meaning--or at least a shape--to what in itself had neither. But the Model universe of our ancestors had a built-in significance. And that in two senses, as having 'significant form' (it is an admirable design) and as a manifestation of the wisdom and goodness that created it. There was no question of waking it into beauty or life. . . . The achieved perfection was already there. The only difficulty was to make an adequate response.[50]

Here, as in several previous discussions, Lewis points out the aesthetic results of such an attitude. It may have been responsible for the typical vice of much medieval literature, ". . . dullness; sheer, unabashed, prolonged dullness, where the author does not seem to be even trying to interest us. . . . One sees how the belief in a world of built-in significance encourages this. The writer feels everything to be so interesting in itself that there is no need for him to make it so."[51] On

the other hand, many of the excellencies of this literature owe their being to their same response. Often, ". . . in the medieval [writer], we are at first hardly aware of a poet at all. The writing is so limpid and effortless that the story seems to be telling itself. Art is at work. But it is the art of people who, no less than the bad medieval authors, have a complete confidence in the intrinsic value of their matter."[52] Of Dante, especially, Lewis writes that the highest art is effortless, a response to the inherent value in the universe rather than a creation of value there. After a study of Dante's similes he notes that the meaning

> . . . of his universe seems to fill his key words--words such as <u>love</u>, <u>light</u>, <u>up</u>, <u>down</u>, <u>high</u>, <u>low</u>, <u>sun</u>, <u>star</u>, and <u>earth</u>--with such a wealth of significance that their mere mention, at those points where the literal narrative requires them, becomes solid poetry. . . . the highest reach of the whole poetic art turns out to be a kind of abdication, and is attained when the whole image the poet sees has entered so deeply into his mind that henceforth he has only to get himself out of the way, to let the seas roll and the mountains shake their leaves or the light shine and the spheres revolve, and all this will be <u>poetry</u>, not things you write poetry about.[53]

The story that tells itself is the art of Dante, Chaucer, and Malory, but not of Joyce in which the growth of the artist is the story.

The doctrine of objective value as it was contained in the "medieval model" carried, for Lewis, crucial ethical implications. He described the transition from

the objective value of the Middle Ages to the modern condition as "that great movement of internalisation, and that consequent aggrandisement of man and desiccation of the outer universe, in which the psychological history of the West has so largely consisted."[54] The debilitation of value and law resulting from this internalisation would lead in Lewis' opinion to the abolition of man himself.

Lewis made two attempts to halt the progress of abolition, or at least to point out its dangers to his contemporaries. The first of these, a series of collected lectures titled The Abolition of Man, attempts to demonstrate that analytical man in conquering Nature is, in reality, destroying value both in Nature and in himself.[55] I shall not now argue for the validity of the Natural Law as a response to objective value and as the essential requirement for law. Instead, I wish simply to state that this is the conviction which Lewis sets forth in these lectures. In his second attempt to halt the internalising process, Lewis presents for public approval a book calculated "to reverse a movement of thought which has been going on since the beginning of philosophy."[56] The process is described grimly as that "which has led us from the living universe where man meets the gods to the final void where almost-nobody discovers his mistakes about almost-nothing."[57] The final void of the modern space

age was a reality to which Lewis could never become reconciled after reconstructing the Heavens of medieval man, filled with life, light, and music.

A reviewer of Lewis' most extended reconstruction of the "medieval model," The Discarded Image, noted that in the final analysis it is the product "not of fideistic but of a profoundly sceptical mind."[58] His observation was based on Lewis' recognition of the arbitrary nature of all models (medieval or modern) as attempts to describe inclusively the total reality of the universe.

If Lewis' mind were skeptical about the modern world, he himself acknowledges he felt this way even about his beloved medieval universe. "Aesthetically satisfying, harmoniously alive, but it was untrue!" To the modern reader who makes this response, Lewis retorts, "But so is yours!" After suggesting the arbitrary nature of all models, he summarizes his position when he writes,

> We can no longer dismiss the change of Models as a simple progress from error to truth. No Model is a catalogue of ultimate realities, and none is a mere fantasy. Each is a serious attempt to get in all the phenomena known at a given period, and each succeeds in getting in a great many. But also, no less surely, each reflects the prevalent psychology of an age almost as much as it reflects the state of that age's knowledge. Hardly any battery of new facts could have persuaded a Greek that the Universe had an attribute so repugnant to him as infinity; hardly any such battery could persuade a modern that it is hierarchical.[59]

All models are then only that, created and sometimes beautifully artistic attempts to cover all the known "facts"

about the universe.

Lewis was quick to acknowledge that his "medieval model" was deficient in theological respects also. He pointed out that, although there is perhaps no logical disharmony between the medieval and the Christian world view, the emphasis is dissimilar. "Certainly there is a striking difference between this Model where God is much less the lover than the beloved and man is a marginal creature, and the Christian picture where the fall of man and the incarnation of God as man for man's redemption is central."[60] Lewis asserted the independence of Christianity from any model in a sermon given in Southwerk Cathedral. In one passage which might almost be taken as a palinode for his reconstruction of the "medieval model," he expresses the traditional Christian scheme of value. "The elaborate world pictures which accompany religion and which look each so solid while they last, turn out to be only shadows. It is religion itself--prayer and sacrament and repentance and adoration--which is here, in the long run, our sole avenue to the real."[61] In his view, the discarded image of the medieval world was subordinate to the doctrinal stability of Christianity and hence the first could be discarded but never the second.

Against the charge that is sometimes made that Lewis was, in fact, hostile to medieval Catholic

Christianity and hence did not understand it, I might say that at least he refers sympathetically to the mystical writers of that time, especially Dame Juliana of Norwich and Walter Hilton, in his autobiography and his letters.[62] A more serious reservation is suggested by Lewis himself, but its implications are left unexplored. He has repeatedly stressed the idea that the "medieval model" was the product of an artistic creation, given the limitations of knowledge and the ethos of the builders. The truth is that

> . . . nature gives most of her evidence in answer to the questions we ask her. Here, as in the courts, the character of the evidence depends on the shape of the examination, and a good cross-examiner can do wonders. He will not indeed elicit falsehoods from an honest witness. But, in relation to the total truth in the witness' mind, the structure of the examination is like a stencil. It determines how much of that total truth will appear and what pattern it will suggest.[63]

The difficulty lies in identifying the cross-examiner. Is it that ambiguous being, medieval man, or is it, in fact, C. S. Lewis? Is the "medieval model" the product of Lewis' creation or of the ethos of former times? Certainly the qualities of the model, its bookishness, hierarchy, and objective value, are ones which Lewis both admired and promoted.[64] What at first glance, however, seems a serious restriction upon further investigation becomes an asset. The model as we have it from Lewis' hand is probably the product of both the medieval ethos and

Lewis' own sympathetic understanding of those times. This is its advantage. In his justly famous inaugural lecture as Professor of Mediaeval and Renaissance English at Cambridge University, Lewis explained the advantages of his sympathies for what he called "Old Western culture":

> I myself belong far more to that Old Western order than to yours. I am going to claim that this, which in one way is a disqualification for my task, is yet in another a qualification. The disqualification is obvious. You don't want to be lectured on Neanderthal Man by a Neanderthaler, still less on dinosaurs by a dinosaur. And yet, is that the whole story? . . . I read as a native texts that you must read as foreigners. You see why I said that the claim was not really arrogant; who can be proud of speaking fluently his mother tongue or knowing his way about his father's house? . . . I may yet be useful as a specimen. I would even dare to go further. Speaking not only for myself but for all other Old Western men whom you may meet, I would say, use your specimens while you can. There are not going to be many more dinosaurs.[65]

Therefore, it is precisely because of his sympathies with the "Old Western" culture that Lewis is able to go much further in his creation of the model than most commentators. Lewis' re-creation of the medieval world view was enriched by an historical imagination which enabled him to lead his readers back into an appreciation of the aesthetic and emotional results of his model. This was Lewis' distinctive contribution; for readers of medieval literature his reconstruction provides an imaginative entrance into a discarded image.

Notes to Chapter II

[1]*The Pilgrim's Regress: An Allegorical Apology for Christianity, Reason, and Romanticism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1965), p. 60. Lewis uses the same image of the prison of the *Zeitgeist* in a non-allegoric way in *Allegory of Love* (New York, 1936), pp. 89-90.

[2]*Regress*, p. 64.

[3]"Preface." Also, in a lecture delivered before the Edinburgh Sir Walter Scott Club in 1956, Lewis makes the point that his admiration of Scott is based on the fact that ". . . he, first of men, taught us the feeling for period." "Sir Walter Scott," *They Asked for a Paper* (London, 1962), p. 103.

[4]"Introduction," *The Incarnation of the Word of God: Being the Treatise of St. Athanasius "De Incarnatione Verbi Dei,"* trans. and ed. a Religious of C.S.M.V. (London, 1953), p. 6.

[5]"De Audiendis Poetis," *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge, 1966), p. 2.

[6]"De Audiendis," *Medieval and Renaissance Literature*, p. 3.

[7]*An Experiment in Criticism* (Cambridge, 1961), pp. 140-141.

[8]"Is History Bunk?" *The Cambridge Review*, LXXVIII (June 1, 1957), 647, 649.

[9]"Is English Doomed?" *The Spectator*, CLXXII (February 11, 1944), 121.

[10]Review of Ruth Mohn, *The Three Estates in Medieval and Renaissance Literature*, *Medium Aevum*, III (February, 1934), 68.

[11]Review of Alan M. F. Gunn, *The Mirror of Love: A Reinterpretation of "The Romance of the Rose,"* *Medium Aevum*, XXII (February, 1953), 29-30.

[12]"Historicism," *The Month*, n.s. IV (July, 1950), 231; reprinted in *Christian Reflections*, ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1967), pp. 100-113.

[13]*English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama* (Oxford, 1954), p. 63. On the dangers of

historicism, see also The Discarded Image (Cambridge, 1964), pp. 82, 174-177. For the purposes of this study, I am making no distinction between literary critic and literary historian. Although Lewis puts himself rightly in the second group, he has the vitality more usually associated with the first. The TLS reviewer of Allegory of Love (June 6, 1936), p. 475, remarked that here was an "historical method, in the hands of one who can keep imaginative control of his facts, [and which] adds depth to appreciation while taking nothing from its immediacy." A later reviewer in the same publication noted that "he combines scholarship, historical imagination and a deep sense of the relevance of the past to our souls' health in the present;" "The Scholar's Tale," TLS (January 7, 1965), p. 2.

[14]Letters, pp. 155-156.

[15]Letters, p. 157. The "P.S." of this letter reveals an important fact about Lewis' knowledge. He remarks here, "I shd. warn you that I am very bad at German and this has doubtless influenced my choice of reading." Nevertheless, he does seem to know enough German to add an occasional quotation from Goethe and other works of German literature. See Medieval and Renaissance Literature, pp. 10, 182. He also cites some works of German medieval scholarship. See the footnotes in Allegory of Love, p. 2, n. 3; p. 62, n. 3.

[16]Medieval and Renaissance Literature, p. vii.

[17]Medieval and Renaissance Literature, p. 8.

[18]Lewis explicitly attacks the ritualistic approach to medieval romance in an article contributed to a festschrift for J. R. R. Tolkien, "The Anthropological Approach," English and Medieval Studies presented to J. R. R. Tolkien, eds. Norman Davis and C. L. Wrenn (London, 1962), pp. 219-230.

[19]The Humane Medievalist: An Inaugural Lecture (Cambridge, 1965), p. 10. See also p. 18, where Bennett makes a suggestive comparison between the literary sources of Lewis' Allegory of Love and the emphasis on medieval aesthetics and the visual arts in D. W. Robertson Jr.'s A Preface to Chaucer.

[20]The Discarded Image, p. 19.

[21]The Discarded Image, p. 52.

[22]The Discarded Image, p. 7.

[23]The Discarded Image, p. 8. The same status is relegated to the barbarian influence in "Imagination and Thought in the Middle Ages," Medieval and Renaissance Literature, p. 43. Christopher Dawson, in Medieval Religion and Other Essays (New York, 1934), p. 98, reaches the same conclusion about the relation between the two cultures.

[24]The Discarded Image, p. 11.

[25]"Imagination and Thought," Medieval and Renaissance Literature, p. 45.

[26]Oxford, 1954. See pp. 17-32, 55-56.

[27]See, for example, J. A. W. Bennett, The Humane Medievalist, p. 26; and "The Scholar's Tale, TLS (January 7, 1965), p. 2. Also Frank Kermode, in a B.B.C. broadcast review of The Discarded Image, refers to this book as "the work of a humanist in its 'discriminating sensitivity to the past'." Cited in Dabney A. Hart, "C. S. Lewis's Defense of Poesie," unpub. diss. (University of Wisconsin, 1959), p. 393.

It is interesting to note Lewis' emphasis on the humanists of Chartres as men who deserved the title "Humanists" because of their assertion of the wholeness of man's nature, rather than on their revival of classical studies. The primary exponent of this later view is, of course, Charles Homer Haskins in The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century (New York, 1927).

[28]The discussion about Nature in this chapter represents a synthesis of Lewis' treatment of the topic in these sources: Allegory of Love, pp. 88-111; Studies in Words (New York, 1960), pp. 39-41; The Discarded Image, pp. 35-39; "Dante's Statius," in Medieval and Renaissance Literature, p. 96.

[29]The Discarded Image, p. 39.

[30]The Discarded Image, p. 36.

[31]Allegory of Love, pp. 88, 94.

[32]The Discarded Image, p. 35.

[33]The Discarded Image, p. 211.

[34]Letters, p. 100.

[35]"Introduction" to Selections from Laȝamon's "Brut," ed. G. L. Brook (London, 1963), p. vii; "What

Chaucer Really Did to 'Il Filostrato'," Essays and Studies, XVII (Oxford, 1932), 59; "The Morte Darthur," in Medieval and Renaissance Literature, p. 110; "The English Prose Morte," in Essays on Malory, ed. J. A. W. Bennett (Oxford, 1963), pp. 24-28. Also in the first chapter of an uncompleted book on Laȝamon, "The Genesis of a Medieval Book," Lewis treats of multiple authorship as an essential feature of medieval literature; see Medieval and Renaissance Literature, pp. 18-40.

[36]"The English Prose Morte," Essays on Malory, p. 28.

[37]Quoted in The Discarded Image, p. 43.

[38]The Discarded Image, p. 44. Lewis' note here is to the classic work on the principle of plentitude, Arthur O. Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being: A Study in the History of an Idea (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1957).

[39]The Discarded Image, p. 97.

[40]The Discarded Image, p. 98.

[41]The Discarded Image, p. 99.

[42]New York, 1963, pp. 29-30.

[43]The Discarded Image, pp. 71-73; 115-116.

[44]The Discarded Image, p. 119. In "Imagination and Thought in the Middle Ages," Medieval and Renaissance Literature, p. 59, Lewis attributes the idea of the earth's being outside the walls to Alanus ab Insulis (De Planctu Naturae, P. L. ccx, Prosa, III, col. 444.A.B.).

[45]"Imagination and Thought," Medieval and Renaissance Literature, p. 60.

[46]"Imagination and Thought," Medieval and Renaissance Literature, pp. 58-59.

[47]The Discarded Image, p. 122.

[48]The Discarded Image, p. 138.

[49]The Abolition of Man (New York, 1965), p. 29.

[50]The Discarded Image, pp. 203-204.

[51]The Discarded Image, p. 204.

[52]The Discarded Image, p. 205. This casualness toward reality also is pointed out by Lewis in "Imagination and Thought," Medieval and Renaissance Literature, p. 60. See also, "Addison," in Essays Presented to David Nicol Smith (Oxford, 1955), p. 12, where Lewis praises the comfortable ease of Addison's world in a way which links him with the medieval rather than the modern man's response to value.

[53]"Dante's Similes," Medieval and Renaissance Literature, pp. 76-77.

[54]The Discarded Image, p. 42.

[55]See especially Chapter 3, "The Abolition of Man," pp. 67-96.

[56]"Preface" to The Hierarchy of Heaven and Earth: A New Diagram of Man in the Universe by D. E. Harding (New York, 1952), p. 9.

[57]"Preface," Harding, p. 11. It might be noted, in support of the importance which I am attaching to Lewis' concern for the process of internalisation, that he has traced this process in two other areas besides that of value. In "Genius and Genius," Lewis traces this process as it affects man's ideas about the spirit; Medieval and Renaissance Literature, pp. 169-181. Lewis has also considered the effect of internalisation on words in "The Death of Words," The Spectator, CLXXIII (September 22, 1944), 261. Here he traces the process by which usage has emptied descriptive words of objective meaning and replaced these meanings with subjective expressions of praise or blame. "The vocabulary of flattery and insult is continually enlarged at the expense of the vocabulary of definition."

[58]TLS (July 16, 1964), p. 632.

[59]The Discarded Image, p. 222.

[60]The Discarded Image, p. 120.

[61]The sermon was printed in two parts, "Dogma and the Universe" (March 19, 1943), p. 96; and "Dogma and Science" (March 26, 1943), pp. 104, 107, in the London religious periodical The Guardian. My quotation is taken from "Dogma and Science," p. 107. Charles S. Singleton noted the absence of religion in the "medieval model" in his review of The Discarded Image, New York Review of Books (July 30, 1964), p. 12, but he made

Christianity part of the model and did not notice Lewis' distinction between the two, cited above.

[62]Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life (New York, 1955), p. 62; Letters, pp. 175, 183. For the charge of Lewis' hostility or lack of knowledge of Catholicism, see Charles Williams' review of Allegory of Love, The Oxford Magazine (February 25, 1937), p. 449; and Bede Griffith's review of Light on C. S. Lewis, The Month, no. 1186, CCXXI, n.s. vol. 35, no. 6 (June, 1966), 339-340.

[63]The Discarded Image, p. 223.

[64]For example, see Lewis' articles, "Notes on the Way: The Necessity of Chivalry," Time and Tide, XXI (August 17, 1940), 841; "Conditions for a Just War," Theology, XXVIII (May, 1939), 373-374; "Talking about Bicycles," Resistance: A Social Literary Magazine (October, 1946), pp. 10-13; "Equality," The Spectator, CLXXI (August 27, 1943), 192.

Reviewers of The Discarded Image have noted the similarity between the medieval model and Lewis' own person. See M. C. Bradbrook, "Medieval Model," New Statesman, n.s. 69 (August 7, 1964), 188; and Helen Gardner in The Listener, LXXII (July 16, 1964), 97.

[65]"De Descriptione Temporum," They Asked for a Paper, pp. 24-25.

III. ALLEGORY AND THE REALIZING IMAGINATION

A significant part of the renewed interest in medieval literature in this century has been devoted to reestablishing the reputation of allegory as a dominant medieval form. Critics have been and are at present engaged in a campaign to answer the charges of the Romantic writers, Blake and Coleridge, that allegory should be described as mechanical rather than imaginative.[1] In the twentieth century, C. S. Lewis was the first critic of English literature to contribute extensively to the reevaluation of allegory.

The concept of imagination occupies a crucial place in Lewis' discussions of allegory. As I have suggested in the previous chapter, Lewis' reconstruction of the medieval model was governed by the insights and growth of the historical imagination [both his own and the reader's]. It is with a similar emphasis that he relates his ideas of medieval allegory to the imagination of the poet.

Imagination, for Lewis, is not a power for the creation of truth. He explicitly denies this meaning when he states that ". . . it must not be supposed that I am in any sense putting forward the imagination as the organ of truth. . . . I am a rationalist. For me, reason is the natural organ of truth; but imagination is the organ of meaning. Imagination, producing new metaphors

or revivifying old, is not the cause of truth, but its condition. . . . And as admittedly, the view I have taken has metaphysical implications. But so has every view."[2] The metaphysical implications which Lewis hints at here will be more fully developed later in this chapter. At present it is sufficient to recall that the typical medieval imagination which Lewis described in The Discarded Image as "realizing," like the concept discussed above, presupposes some split between the poet and the objective world of value which the poetic imagination can heal. How the allegorical imagination of the poet responds to this world is the subject of this chapter.

Lewis affirmed the continuity of his interest in the imagination when he wrote to the Milton Society of America to explain a bibliography of his works. Of the long, seemingly disconnected list which he was sending, Lewis affirms that

> . . . there is a guiding thread. The imaginative man in me is older, more continuously operative, and in that sense more basic than either the religious writer or the critic. It was he who made me first attempt (with little success) to be a poet. It was he who, in response to the poetry of others, made me a critic, and in defence of that response, sometimes a critical controversialist. It was he who after my conversion led me to embody my religious belief in symbolical or mythopeic forms, ranging from Screwtape to a kind of theological science-fiction. And it was of course he who has brought me, in the last few years, to write the series of Narnian stories for children; . . . .[3]

If Lewis' assertion about himself is true, and we must

presume it to be so, then the idea of imagination [both Lewis' and others] merits considerable attention in any discussion of his criticism of medieval literature. Therefore, I will use the idea as the focus of this chapter, in an attempt to describe Lewis' contribution to medieval studies in the matter of allegory.

After an initial study of Lewis' theory of allegory, I shall describe some philosophical and historical conditions for its rise and make some distinctions in its application as opposed to symbol and myth. An important result of Lewis' emphasis on medieval allegory is his reexamination of literary works of the genre. In my discussion I shall emulate Lewis and devote a proportional part of my attention to the Romance of the Rose and its successors in English literature. Finally, in the analysis which follows, I shall suggest some difficulties occasioned by Lewis' own uses of the term "allegory" and describe his place in the critical tradition of this mode.

A reader of Lewis' books, both religious and critical, will soon discover an allegorical imagination at work. His autobiography ends with an Augustinian allegory of the life-journey. "When we are lost in the woods the sight of a signpost is a great matter. . . . But when we have found the road and are passing signposts every few miles, we shall not stop and stare. They will encourage us and we shall be grateful to the authority that set them up. But

we shall not stop and stare, or not much; not on this road, though their pillars are of silver and their lettering of gold. 'We would be at Jerusalem.'"[4] Allegory, which was for Lewis so much a part of the medieval imagination, was also the mirror of his mind. For, as one critic described him, "His imagination was stirred by ideas and concepts and by their congruity, and they came to vivid life in his mind, becoming almost persons. He was a born allegorist."[5] As such he was eminently qualified to revivify a lost interest in medieval allegory.

Lewis directed his attention to the understanding of medieval allegory early in his academic career and throughout it he returns to this idea to clarify or modify earlier statements. Although the main source of his theory of allegory is The Allegory of Love, begun in 1928 and published in 1936, it is necessary to modify this discussion by many other books, articles, and reviews, some written as late as 1958.[6]

Throughout his works, Lewis posits many descriptions of allegory. Perhaps the earliest published one is contained in the much discussed passage of The Allegory of Love in which he distinguished between allegory and symbolism. An equivalence exists between the immaterial and the material and this

> . . . may be used by the mind in two ways, and we need here be concerned with only one of them. On the one hand you can start with an immaterial fact, such as the passions you actually experience,

> and can then invent visibilia to express them. If you are hesitating between an angry retort and a soft answer, you can express your state of mind by a person called Ira with a torch and letting her contend with another invented person called Patientia. This is allegory, and it is with this alone that we have to deal. But there is another way of using the equivalence, which is almost the opposite of allegory, and which I call sacramentalism or symbolism. If our passions, being immaterial, can be copied by material inventions, then it is possible that our material world in its turn is the copy of an invisible world. As the God Amor and his figurative garden are to the actual passions of men, so perhaps we ourselves and our 'real' world are to something else. The attempt to read that something else through its sensible imitations, to see the archetype in the copy, is what I mean by symbolism or sacramentalism.[7]

The justification for the inclusion of this lengthy quotation in the text is simply that implicitly and explicitly it contains the major considerations about allegory which Lewis would develop later. It merits our serious attention also because subsequent critics always begin their exposé by a rejection of Lewis' distinction between allegory and symbolism.

Allegory, as a mode of expression, has the quality of giving an objective form to the inner world of psychological reality. It is a mode which enables the poet to depict the subjective world of the soul. It is important to notice here Lewis' emphasis on the reality of the inner psychological world. This reality is assumed in the mode of expression which we know as allegory. It is made meaningful by the arrangement of the poet's imagination. The resulting allegory is less real than the object of

imitation, the world of the soul, for as Lewis views it there is ". . . nothing 'mystical' or mysterious about medieval allegory, the poets know quite clearly what they are about and are well aware that the figures which they present to us are fictions. Symbolism is a mode of thought, but allegory is a mode of expression."[8] Or, to extend the contrast made by Lewis, symbolism is a mode which creates a mode of reality concomitant with the expression; allegory is a mode which actualizes a mode of reality assumed to exist prior to the expression.

The imagination of the poet writing an allegory is, therefore, described in Lewis' remarks about the typically-medieval "realizing" imagination. The poets who are concerned with representing in allegory an action of the soul ". . . are not trying to heighten it or transform it. It possesses them wholly. Their eyes and ears are steadily fixed upon it, and so--perhaps hardly aware how much they are inventing--they see and hear what the event must have been like."[9] The eyes of the poet of allegory are fixed on the reality of psychological action.

In a preface written for the second edition of his own allegory, The Pilgrim's Regress, Lewis describes the lucidity of the allegorical imagination, but this time from the reader's point of view. After apologizing for the addition of a chapter-by-chapter key to the allegory, he relates this practice to his general theory of allegory

when he maintains that it is against his practice "To supply a 'key' to an allegory which, as a literary critic, I have elsewhere denounced. It may encourage people to suppose that allegory is disguise, a way of saying obscurely what could have been said more clearly. But in fact all good allegory exists not to hide but to reveal; make the inner world more palpable by giving it an (imagined) concrete embodiment. . . . For when allegory is at its best, it approaches myth, which must be grasped with the imagination, not with the intellect."[10] Good allegory exists to expand the consciousness of the relations in the inner world. Its meaning is evident and does not demand point by point explication. The reality is grasped before the tropes can be explained.

In another context Lewis illustrates further what the response of the imagination to allegory should be. Too many readers have

> . . . the pernicious habit of reading allegory as if it were a cryptogram to be translated; as if, having grasped what an image (as we say) 'means', we threw the image away and thought of the ingredient in real life which it represents. But that method leads you continually out of the book back into the conception you started from and would have had without reading it. The right process is the exact reverse. He ought not to be thinking, 'This green valley, where the shepherd boy is singing, represents humility;' we ought to be discovering, as we read, that humility is like that green valley. That way, moving always into the book not out of it, from concept to the image, enriches the concept. And that is what allegory is for.[11]

As a critic of literature, Lewis rightly restricts his

speculations to the theory of allegory, and examines medieval examples of the genre. He refrains from positing allegorical interpretations which often belong to the realm of the theologian and philosopher.

Lewis defended allegory against charges that it was mechanical and dull. His claim was rather that in medieval literature the form served as a channel for freedom and expansion of consciousness. The allegorist never makes a simple equation between A and B as members of the poem but is ". . . really saying 'A is like B', and therefore quite possibly like C, D, and E as well. Thus B, C, D, and E can change and melt into one another, now this predominant, now that, in the fluidity of the poem. Waves at sea are not less beautiful because you cannot represent them in a contour map."[12] The key to understanding allegory, therefore, is not to find equations but to seek multiple similarities.

In the previous chapter, I described Lewis' method of building the medieval model from existing medieval literature. He follows this same empirical process in defining the nature of allegory. In each literary case studied, the allegory represents an inner reality with very definite boundaries. The battlefield world of Prudentius, the garden world of the lover in the Romance of the Rose, the intellectual world of the

medieval débat--these are all circumscribed by definite boundaries. Within these microcosms the poets of allegory are able to conduct their bellum intestinum of virtue, love, or intellectual knowledge. I am not claiming that these are the only scenes of allegory, but Lewis suggests that they are the most typical ones. A more important fact to be noted is that each scene presupposed two or more points of view within a definite realm. The resulting conflict is the basic movement of allegory, the bellum intestinum of the virtues and vices, the moods of a lady-love, or the relative merits of different kinds of knowledge.[13]

In the allegorical practice of medieval poets, the bellum intestinum was usually carried on by personifications of varying attributes of one splintered personality rather than between persons. I shall be concerned with Lewis' assignment of the discovery of the splintered personality to a specific historical period later in this chapter. It is necessary, however, to describe here in more detail the nature of this inner conflict. Lewis affirmed that

> . . . it is plain that to fight against 'Temptation' is also to explore the inner world; and it is scarcely less plain that to do so is to be already on the verge of allegory. We cannot speak, perhaps we can hardly think, of an 'inner conflict' without a metaphor; and every metaphor is an allegory in little. And as the conflict becomes more and more important, it is inevitable that these metaphors should expand and coalesce, and

> finally turn into the fully-fledged allegorical poem. . . . That unitary 'soul' or 'personality' which interests the novelist is for him [the allegorical poet] merely the arena in which the combatants meet: it is to the combatants--those 'accidents occurring in a substance'--that he must attend.[14]

Even in the allegory of love where the conflict would seem to be between the lover and his beloved, the struggle is usually among the warring elements of the beloved. Lewis uses the heroine of the Romance of the Rose to exemplify the process. The author of the first part of the allegory, Guillaume de Lorris, ". . . removes the heroine entirely. Her character is distributed among personifications. . . . You cannot really have the lady, and, say, the lady's Pride, walking about on the same stage as if they were entities on the same plane. Nor is it natural for a lover to regard his courtship as an adventure, not with a single person, but with that person's varying moods, some of which are his friends and some his enemies."[15] The allegorical personifications represent with varying levels of vibrancy the friends and enemies of the lover, struggling for control in the soul of the beloved.[16]

Besides being concerned with the theory of allegory, Lewis' writings on the subject presuppose certain philosophical considerations. The consciousness of the inner psychological world and the resulting personifications arose at a specific time about which Lewis speculates that there was a ". . . need for allegory which

much deeper causes had produced. The root of this need as we have seen is twofold; on the one hand, the gods sink into personifications; on the other, a wide-spread moral revelation forces men to personify their passions."[17] In Lewis' phrase, if ". . . the gods had not died into allegory," they could not have been the object of so much imaginative activity. This death into allegory enables the poet to revivify them in another realm, as the poets of Chartres did with Nature.[18]

It is the condition made possible by the death of the old Roman gods that Lewis first discusses. In the post-Virgilian poetry of Statius, the use of personifications indicates a drift toward allegory. Clementia of Statius' Thebiad has lost her mythological associations and represents a state of the human soul. Allegory is present precisely ". . . in that moment, while the human (and Olympian) action of the poem stays suspended and the personified good and evil of the human soul contend, not through their human representatives, but, face to face, with each other, ..."[19] Lewis traces this state of demythologizing the gods from Statius, through Prudentius, and Martianus Capella.[20] Of this state Lewis affirms that it was the condition, not the cause for the rise of allegory.

To the other half of the condition, the moral revolution which set men looking inward, Lewis devotes

equal attention, for it was this condition which provided the scene, the action, and the actors of allegory. Again, the time set for the growth of the habit of introspection was in the late Roman Empire. Although the Christian moral code obviously made an important contribution here, Lewis denies that it was the only significant force at work. The moral philosophers of that age were those who stressed the conflict in the soul between good and evil. Lewis notes that ". . . men of that age, if they had not discovered the moral conflict, had at least discovered in it a new importance. They were vividly aware, as the Greeks had not been, of the divided will, the bellum intestinum. The new state of mind can be studied almost equally well in Seneca, in St. Paul, in Epictetus, in Marcus Aurelius, and in Tertullian."[21] This new state of mind was characterized by an emphasis on introspective reality, or in another phrase, by the realm of the subjective.

No man writes in a vacuum of ideas and this is especially true of an academic critic like Lewis, whose circle of friends included scholars from many disciplines. To one of these especially, Owen Barfield, Lewis has consistently and frequently given expressions of his gratitude.[22] This relationship is important because Barfield's work supplies much of the needed background concerning both the theory and the rise of allegory. His books,

especially Poetic Diction and Saving the Appearances: A Study in Idolatry, contribute to an understanding of Lewis' theory of allegory. Of his relationship with Barfield, Lewis has written that the differences often were violent, but the conflict of minds was challenging. "Actually (though it never seems so at the time) you modify one another's thought; out of this perpetual dog-fight a community of mind and a deep affection emerge. But I think he changed me a good deal more than I him. Much of the thought which he afterwards put into Poetic Diction had already become mine before that important little book appeared. It would be strange if it had not."[23] Lewis drew from this book by Barfield the general assumption about the movement of consciousness from objectivity to subjectivity, or from unity to division, in which the allegorical imagination is an intermediate stage. Barfield's thesis, which both he and Lewis called the process of internalisation, was described by Lewis as a movement

> . . . whereby man has come to know the universe. . . . We can observe a single one-way progression. At the outset the universe appears packed with will, intelligence, life, and positive qualities; every tree is a nymph and every planet a god. Man himself is akin to the gods. The advance of knowledge gradually empties this rich and genial universe: first of its gods, then of its colours, smells, sounds, and tastes, finally of solidity itself as solidity was originally imagined. As these items were taken from the world, they are transferred to the subjective side of the account: classified as our sensations, thoughts, images or emotions. The

> Subject becomes gorged, inflated, at the expense of the Object. But the matter does not rest there. The same method which has emptied the world now proceeds to empty ourselves.[24]

The rise of the allegorical imagination may be placed, according to Lewis, at that moment in the history of language when the reality of the gods is denied and attention is turned inward to the reality of the action of the soul. Thus Lewis can locate that moment in the late Roman Empire.

But if allegory can be contrasted with symbolism it is not because they flourished together. The "flourishing of allegory" left little room for the use of symbolism. In Lewis' judgment, ". . . the poetry of symbolism does not find its greatest expression in the Middle Ages at all, but rather in the time of the romantics; and this, again, is significant of the profound difference that separates it from allegory."[25] This later date for the "flourishing of symbolism" suggests that it is an attempt to reunite the levels of reality which were divided or denied by the process of internalisation.

An important result of this movement is that there has been subsequent internalisation which has further emptied allegory of any power of representing reality. Barfield suggests this difficulty when he points out that modern readers of allegory ". . . find allegory desiccated precisely because, for us, mere words are themselves

desiccated. . . . For us, the characters in an allegory are 'personified abstractions', but for the man of the Middle Ages Grammar or Rhetoric, Mercy or 'Daunger', were real to begin with, simply because they were 'names'. And names could be representatives, in much the same solid-feeling way as things were."[26] To return to a point which I made earlier, medieval allegory does not create a reality in the process of internalisation, but it is a mode of expressing the resulting inner reality, acknowledged to be present. This representation is accomplished by the realizing imagination of the medieval poet of allegory.

Lewis' statements about the subject of allegory, the bellum intestinum, stress that this warfare is a subjective one. It is important to understand that "subjective" is not a synonym for relativistic (in this context). Rather, it is a description of the inner life. Although Lewis never states it explicitly, it is a fair assumption from his examples to assert that the writing of allegory presupposes the opposite of a relativistic sense of value. The allegorical tradition survives when the contestants of the inner warfare are universally accepted as true and real. Even though the scene for medieval allegory is often subjective or interior, the values are not usually so.[27]

In Lewis' criticism of medieval literature, the

words "myth," "archetype," and "symbol" occur frequently in conjunction or contrast with his discussions of allegory. The Personal Heresy, first published in 1939 as a public debate with E. M. W. Tillyard, takes up a favorite allegorical poem, the Romance of the Rose, in an attempt to distinguish between mathematical symbols and the poetic symbols used by Guillaume de Lorris. As Lewis describes it, a ". . . poetic symbol--like the Rose, for Love, in Guillaume de Lorris--comes trailing clouds of glory from the real world, clouds whose shape and colour largely determine and explain its poetic use. In an equation [mathematical symbols] x and y will do as well as a and b; but the Romance of the Rose could not, without loss, be rewritten as the Romance of the Onion, and if a man did not see why, we could only send him back to the real world to study roses, onions and love, all of them still untouched by poetry, still raw."[28] Or, in another place, Lewis links allegory, myth, and symbol in his praise of the end of Gower's Confessio Amantis. He describes the ending as ". . . one of those rare passages in which medieval allegory rises to myth, in which the symbols, though fashioned to represent mere single concepts, take on new life and represent rather the principles--not otherwise accessible--which unite whole classes of concepts. All is shot through with meanings which the author may never have been aware of; and, on this level, it does not matter

whether he was or not."[29] At first glance, these passages seem to reveal an inconsistency in Lewis' critical writings which previously had distinguished so carefully between allegory and symbolism. Sometimes in the rush of ideas in which Lewis' writings abound, there are undoubtedly inconsistencies in his critical terminology. I shall discuss these instances later in this chapter. My concern here, however, is to distinguish the valid differences among these related terms, which will illuminate more clearly the nature of allegory.

According to Lewis, allegory is defined mainly in relation to the realizing imagination of the poet. On the other hand, in defining myth, his attention is turned to its effect on the reader. The nature of myth is of an experience which ". . . is not only grave but awe-inspiring. We feel it to be numinous. It is as if something of great moment had been communicated to us."[30] Most frequently Lewis connects the idea of myth with the inherited and traditional stories about the gods. As I explained previously, these gods at one time "died into allegory," but on another level their stories retain a power over the human imagination drawn from a variety of sources. Lewis' view is that ". . . in the huge mass of mythology which has come down to us a good many different sources are mixed--true history, allegory, ritual, the human delight in story telling, etc."[31] But it is not in the particular

words of any one literary work that myth lies, for in contrast to allegory which is a mode of expression, myth has an existence outside any one embodiment. Lewis described the writing of the Scotch writer, George Macdonald, as ". . . fantasy that hovers between the allegorical and the mythopeic. . . . The critical problem with which we are confronted is whether this art--the art of myth-making--is a species of the literary art. The objection to so classifying it is that the Myth does not essentially exist in words at all. We all agree that the story of Balder is a great myth, a thing of inexhaustible value. . . . What really delights and nourishes me is a particular pattern of events, which would equally delight and nourish if it had reached me by some other medium which involved no words at all--say by a mime, or a film."[32] Therefore, even though Lewis speaks of Gower as a writer whose allegorical poem rises to the level of myth, the relation implied is not that which exists between comparative degrees of a single mode. The allegorical literary mode can embody a mythic experience, but this experience is ultimately independent of any expression, literary or visual.

When Lewis reviewed J. R. R. Tolkien's trilogy, The Lord of the Rings, he further explored the distinction between allegory and myth. The myth of the Tolkinian world has been created and in this sense it differs from the usual mythic pattern. But, in a more

important way, it resembles its predecessors in myth, for ". . . in the Tolkinian world you can hardly put your foot down anywhere from Esgaroth to Forlindon or between Ered Mithrin and Khand, without stirring the dust of history."[33] The creation of myth has then a rich depth of meaning which defies specific interpretation. The characters of myth, ". . . its giants, dragons, paradises, gods, and the like are themselves the expression of certain basic elements in man's spiritual experience. In that sense they are more like words--the words of a language which speaks the else unspeakable--than they are like the people and places in a novel."[34] These characters belong to each reader in a specific way; there are no general pointers or accepted interpretations as with allegory. The mythic experience is too wide for specific embodiment.

The second distinction, that between allegory and symbolism, is more difficult. The seminal passage quoted previously from The Allegory of Love which distinguished between allegory and symbolism was definite enough. But unfortunately Lewis did not consistently maintain this distinction throughout his criticism. A reader is tempted to say of his usage what he himself said of Lawrence's four-letter words; ". . . his . . . usage is a rebellion against language."[35] For example, in his discussion of Spenser, he says of allegory that the "picture-language of allegory is ultimately derived, . . . from the

unconscious. But by Spenser's time allegory (both literary and pictorial) had been practised so long that certain symbols had an agreed meaning which everyone could understand directly, without plunging into the depths."[36] [Italics are mine.] In this remark Lewis has blurred his previous distinction between symbolism and allegory. Such a distinction, according to his examples, would imply that symbol is to symbolism as personification is to allegory. But, in spite of this inconsistency, Lewis repeats the contrast between symbolism and allegory frequently enough to merit further explanation.

To rephrase the earlier contrast, the poet of allegory ". . . leaves the given--his own passions--to talk of that which is confessedly less real, which is a fiction. The symbolist leaves the given to find that which is more real."[37] This discussion of symbolism equates it with sacramentalism. But, in a later sermon titled "Transposition," published in 1949, Lewis recognized the inadequacy of his descriptions. Here he sought to distinguish between symbolism which simply uses a sign to represent something and sacramentalism which in this case uses a sign ". . . because it is also more than a sign, because in it the thing signified is really in a certain mode present."[38] The examples which Lewis gives in this sermon are of word pictures as mere symbols but of visual pictures as sacramentals, representing different

modes of existence of the same reality. On the sacramental level the reality is more fully present than on the symbolic level. The importance of this distinction is that, like his remarks about medieval allegory, it is an attempt to invest a sign with a depth of reality not immediately apparent to the imagination.

Although Lewis had some harsh things to say about the application of psychological knowledge to literature, he praised the contribution of depth psychology toward achieving a deeper imaginative response to symbols. He describes the Jungian theory of primordial images as a way of healing ". . . some of the wounds made by materialism. For the general effect of materialism is to give you, where you expected an indefinite depth of reality, a flat wall only a few inches away. Psycho-analysis [which Lewis links with Jungian psychology] offers you some kind of depth back again--lots of things hidden behind the wall."[39] Elsewhere Lewis praises the contribution of such archetypal critics as Maud Bodkin, G. Wilson Knight, and D. G. James.[40]

Discussions of medieval allegory, myth, symbolism, and archetypal images which recur in Lewis' criticism are similar in that each mode is seen as an attempt to achieve a deeper representation of its respective reality with reference to either the creating or responding imagination. In his discussions of the four modes, Lewis shifts

the locus of the reality slightly. Allegory, in medieval times, presents the psychological reality of the soul; symbolism seeks to link a transcendent reality with the shadows of this world. Archetypal imagery looks inward to a correspondence between recurring figures or actions and the unconscious heritage of mankind; myth is the outward representation [inherited or created] of the universal experiences of mankind. Depth of representation is the aim of the artist working in each of these four modes. Lewis' criticism of these modes seldom is evaluative. Rather, it is an attempt to illuminate the means by which the reality of each is more fully present in the resulting literary work.[41]

The most important medieval allegory which was at once the victim and the beneficiary of Lewis' exposition of the theory of allegory was the Romance of the Rose. The emphasis with which Lewis develops the double nature of its importance, as a model in itself and as a transmitter of great value, was not present in critical literature before his time. The French editor and critic Ernest Langlois had, of course, given us a critical text together with extensive research on manuscripts and sources. Skeat and others had pointed out the parallel passages and philosophical similarities of the Romance and Troilus.[42] Early in his career as a University Lecturer at Oxford, in 1928, Lewis inaugurated a new series in the syllabus of lectures,

"The Romance of the Rose and its Successors."[43] His personal letters indicate that during this year he was also beginning his research on The Allegory of Love in which the chapter on the French poem occupies a central place.[44]

Using the sympathy for allegory which Lewis hoped his exposition provided, he directed that readers ". . . never again look upon the Romance as an artificial poem, nor call its personifications 'shadowy', nor its mechanisms an arbitrary fashion."[45] Considered as allegory, the poem possesses an extraordinary fidelity to the reality of the inner life. Lewis' concern is to illustrate almost step by step throughout part one of the poem the relationship between allegory and psychological reality. An example of this technique, of which there are many, is the passage in which Lewis explicates the relation between the moods of the lady's heart and the wooing of the lover--all realities in themselves:

> But Bialacoil [fair welcome] and his allies are not always dominant in the lady's heart. If you make a false step you will bring Fear to the surface instead and Bialacoil may vanish for hours together. If you endanger her reputation you may have Shame to deal with--an uncertain spirit, who will try to defend Bialacoil, it may be, and yet mar all with her silly sooth. But these two are not the most serious enemies. A lover can always manage Fear and Shame, who are helpless if once Venus comes to his aid. The real enemy who cannot be flattered or overcome, who must be kept asleep because, if he wakes, your only course is to take to your heels, the ever-present dread of lovers and the stoutest defence of virgins, is Danger.[46]

Thus, Lewis unravels the metaphorical action which is carried on by the lively personifications of the allegory.

But, he is not content with this separation of the poem and its meaning. Such a process is alien to his own directions about the reading of allegory, which is, according to his statement ". . . a simile seen from the other end; and when we have seen the point of simile we do not throw it away. . . . It is not enough to see that the dreamer gazing into the fountain signifies the lover first looking into the lady's eyes. We must feel that the scene by the fountain side is an imaginative likeness of the lover's experience."[47] The allegorical interpretation must be constantly united with its image and one used to enrich the meaning of the other.

In 1939, Lewis published a book of essays titled Rehabilitations. Such a title might also have been applied to his efforts on behalf of the Scotch poetry of the fifteenth century and Spenser. Of these literary descendants of the Romance of the Rose, Lewis writes that ". . . few, if any, attempted to do over again what Guillaume de Lorris had done--that is, to represent an action or story of love in a thoroughgoing allegory. . . . /For/ each new child has his individual traits as well as his family likeness."[48] The "children" of the Romance which lie within my declared interest, medieval literature,

are the Scotch poets, especially Gavin Douglas and William Dunbar.

Lewis' interest in Scotch poetry, only hinted at in The Allegory of Love, reached its full development in the later book, English Literature in the Sixteenth Century. In spite of the way critics reacted to this book with its assumed denial of the importance of the Renaissance, they were almost unanimous in their praise of the chapter which described "The End of the Middle Ages in Scotland." Helen Gardner spoke of this section as rich ". . . in discriminating and original praise of works which have fallen out of current discussions."[49] Obviously, the breadth of both form and interest presented in the works of these poets is too wide to enable them to be characterized simply as children of the Romance of the Rose, but this influence is important. According to Lewis' evaluation, "It is this widely diffused Anglo-French school to which the so-called 'Chaucerians' of Scotland really belong; a school whose allegorical method descends not from Chaucer but, along with Chaucer, from Guillaume de Lorris, Machault, Deschamps and the like. . . ."[50] It is as inheritors of this tradition rather than the Chaucerian that Lewis views Gavin Douglas and William Dunbar.

Whatever else they were, these two poets were also court poets of pomp and ceremony. "They are in

language what the gorgeous armours of tournament were in life; the proper expression for a vision of brightness, largesse, ceremony, exhilaration."[51] The solemn and stately manner of their allegories, especially King Hart by Douglas and Dunbar's The Thrissell and the Rose, illustrates this analogy. Lewis praises these poems in which nothing ". . . can ever be old" and where the poet has touched ". . . a personification into life."[52] Writing with an admiring gusto, Lewis demonstrates by ample and well-selected quotations the truth of his claims. Because of his emphasis, future readers of Scotch poetry will eschew their initial impression of its quaintness and respond instead to a traditional, virile, and above all professional expression of poetic value.

At the beginning of this chapter I stated that Lewis inaugurated, for the twentieth century, a new interest in the theory of allegory and its literary results. Many of the critics after Lewis have used his theory as their beginning point and therefore may also be regarded as critics of his work. I have already admitted that there is present in Lewis' writings some confusion about the use of such key words as "allegory" and "symbolism." In spite of his effort at distinctions, his usage sometimes neglects these. For example, at one point Lewis describes the symbolism of Spenser's The Faerie Queene, which is usually regarded as an allegory of the first

rank.[53] Critics have been quick to respond with the claim that Lewis' distinction cannot be maintained.[54] But, if we keep in mind that Lewis was discussing medieval allegory and that the relation of this mode to his theory of internalisation is essential, I believe his distinctions are valid. On the other hand, subsequent critics have often agreed with his statement that genuine allegory is a mode of expression, a structural element which cannot be put into a literary work by the reader but only by the author.[55] This is, of course, no new discovery on Lewis' part but is at least as old as the first commentator on allegory, Quintilian, who characterized it as a trope of style which ". . . either presents one thing in words and another in meaning, or else something absolutely opposed to the meaning of the words."[56] In this emphasis Lewis' theory of allegory is not unique, but his elaboration of it in this century is impressive.

In a paper written in 1950, "The Literary Impact of the Authorised Version," Lewis predicted a revival of interest in medieval Biblical exegesis. "Our own age, steeped in the symbolism of dreams and in the allegorical or semi-allegorical work of writers like Kafka and Mr. Rex Warner, will not look down on that doctrine [the multiple senses of Scripture] with superiority."[57] The subsequent history of Biblical allegory and its extension

to secular medieval literature has proved that Lewis was correct in this regard at least.

In The Allegory of Love, Lewis discusses the importance of allegorizing ancient texts, both Christian and pagan. After describing several allegorized pagan myths, he denies that this practice or its Christian exegetical counterpart was the cause for the medieval allegorical period. "It is, however, extremely probable that any help which this method of exegesis lent to the original allegory was amply repaid: when allegory becomes a man's natural mode of expression it is inevitable that he will find more and more allegory in the ancient authors whom he respects. What is not to be thought of is that the mere practice of allegorical interpretation or the mere impetus of rhetoric, by themselves, could have imposed an 'allegorical period' on the literature that followed."[58] This caution written before 1936 has not been heeded.

More explicitly, Lewis rejected the claim made by D. W. Robertson Jr. and others, ". . . who see medieval literature primarily, if not exclusively as exposition of medieval Christian doctrine. The Middle Ages would have been pleased to be taken in this way, but would have known that the compliment was undeserved. . . . If I say little about this error it is because I anticipate that most modern readers will be in no danger

of excessive leniency to it. If I were addressing only my 'even-Christians' I might sing a very different tune."[59] If he were living today, Lewis would undoubtedly recognize that contrary to his expectations scholars of medieval literature are, in fact, more than lenient toward this view. He more nearly describes the present situation when he writes, ". . . the wit of man cannot devise a story in wh. the wit of some other man cannot find an allegory."[60]

Notes to Chapter III

[1]For a history of Romantic reaction against allegory, see Graham Hough, A Preface to "The Faerie Queene" (New York, 1962), pp. 100-102.

[2]"Bluspels and Flalansferes," Rehabilitations and Other Essays (London, 1939), pp. 157-158.

[3]Letters, p. 260.

[4]Surprised by Joy, p. 238.

[5]Helen Gardner, The Listener, LXXII (July 16, 1964), 97. A former pupil of Lewis, George Bailey, also affirms the importance of allegory in Lewis' canon. "For such a man allegory became the modus operandi for his life work." "My Oxford Tutor: C. S. Lewis," The Reporter, XXX (April, 1964), 40.

[6]In his personal letters, the first mention of medieval allegory was in 1928, the last, in 1958; see Letters, pp. 127, 283. The Oxford University Gazette, LIX (October 12, 1928), 55, announced a series of university lectures to be given by Lewis during the Michaelmas [fall] term of that year, which would also, apparently, deal with the nature of allegory. The announced topic was "The Romance of the Rose and its Successors." This series was repeated in the following year also; Oxford University Gazette, LX (October 11, 1929), 58.

[7]Allegory of Love, pp. 44-45. It is interesting to compare Lewis' list of medieval contributors to the theory of symbolism [vs. allegory] with that of later critics on allegory. Both include the same writers, principally, Augustine and Hugh of St. Victor. See Allegory of Love, p. 46. In another place Lewis describes allegory in similar terms to that of the quoted definition. "By an allegory I mean a composition (whether pictorial or literary) in which immaterial realities are represented by feigned physical objects; e.g. a pictured Cupid allegorically represents erotic love (which in reality is an experience, not an object occupying a given area of space) or, in Bunyan, a giant represents Despair." Letters, p. 283.

[8]Allegory of Love, p. 48.

[9]The Discarded Image, p. 208

[10]"Preface," The Pilgrim's Regress, p. 13.

[11]"The Vision of John Bunyan," The Listener LXVIII (December 13, 1962), 1007.

[12]"Neoplatonism in the Poetry of Spenser," Medieval and Renaissance Literature, pp. 160-161. A similar point about the ambiguity and freedom of allegory was mentioned by E. K. Rand, "Medieval Gloom and Medieval Uniformity," Speculum, I (July, 1926), 267. "Freedom of thought was not repressed in the Middle Ages. It was fostered by the allegorical method of interpretation, whereby the philosopher could connect his private theory with established truth."

[13]Allegory of Love, p. 68.

[14]Allegory of Love, pp. 60-61.

[15]Allegory of Love, p. 118.

[16]In the only other study devoted exclusively to medieval allegory, Leo L. Camp denies that personifications are in fact allegoric. Like Lewis, he places the emphasis on metaphoric action. "Studies in the Rationale of Medieval Allegory," unpub. diss. (University of Washington, 1943).

[17]Allegory of Love, p. 63.

[18]Allegory of Love, pp. 87-111, and The Discarded Image, pp. 38-39.

[19]Allegory of Love, p. 54.

[20]Allegory of Love, pp. 48 ff.

[21]Allegory of Love, p. 60.

[22]Lewis acknowledges his debt to Barfield in many places in his works. See, for example, the "Preface" to Allegory of Love; Surprised by Joy, pp. 199-200; and "Hamlet: The Prince or the Poem?" They Asked for a Paper, p. 63. Robert J. Reilly in "Romantic Religion," unpub. diss. (Michigan State University, 1960), describes in more detail the influence of Barfield upon Lewis.

[23]Surprised by Joy, p. 200.

[24]"Preface" to The Hierarchy of Heaven and Earth: A New Diagram of Man, p. 9. Lewis also describes the process at the end of The Discarded Image, pp. 214-215, and in English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, pp. 3-4. Oliver Elton in his review of Allegory of Love,

Medium Aevum, VI (1937), 36, notes that Lewis makes an original contribution in his suggestion that the poetic imagination which was bound when the gods were gods is able to flower freely when they become acknowledged myths.

[25]Allegory of Love, p. 46. In the same place, Lewis describes the bestiaries as ". . . the chief monuments of the symbolical idea, in the Middle Ages, ..."

[26]Saving the Appearances: A Study in Idolatry (London, 1957), p. 86.

[27]Two later critics of allegory have developed Lewis' thought in this regard. Both affirm that the nature of allegory demands an inward-looking culture and a firm base of cultural authority. See Edwin Honig, Dark Conceit: The Making of Allegory (Evanston, Illinois, 1959), p. 87; and Harold Bloom, "The Allegorical Principle," ELH, XVIII (September, 1951), 189-190.

[28]The Personal Heresy: A Controversy (London, 1939), p. 97.

[29]Allegory of Love, pp. 220-221.

[30]An Experiment in Criticism, p. 44. The importance of myth to Lewis' criticism has been explored very fully in the unpublished dissertation of Dabney Hart, "C. S. Lewis's Defense of Poesie," (University of Wisconsin, 1959). Her conclusion is that "The essential first principle of all literature, according to Lewis is myth," p. 16. My concern in this chapter is more limited, simply to study the relationship between allegory and myth in an effort to illumine the former.

[31]"A Christian Reply to Professor Price," Phoenix Quarterly, I (Autumn, 1946), 33.

[32]"Preface," George Macdonald: An Anthology (New York, 1947), pp. 14-15.

[33]"The Gods Return to Earth," Time and Tide, XXXV (August 14, 1954), 1083. Lewis describes another created myth of modern literature, the myth of evolutionism or developmentalism which was implied in Keats' Oceanus in Hyperion and "for which Darwin was later to supply the scientific superstructure." See "Tragic Ends," a review of George Steiner's The Death of Tragedy, Encounter, XVIII (February, 1962), 97-101. "Is Theology Poetry?" (1945), reprinted in They Asked for a Paper, pp. 154-156, was an earlier but more expanded form of the same viewpoint.

[34]*Preface to "Paradise Lost"* (New York, 1961), p. 57. Lewis makes a similar comparison in both reviews of Tolkien's stories which he wrote, "The Gods Return to Earth," *Time and Tide*, XXXV (August 14, 1954), 1082-83; and "The Dethronement of Power," *Time and Tide*, XXXVI (October 22, 1955), 1373-74.

Although Lewis' remarks about myth and allegory are generally phrased in non-evaluative phrases, at least once he does describe myth as ". . . a higher thing than an allegory. . . . Into an allegory a man can put only what he already knows; in a myth he puts what he does not yet know and cd. not come by in any other way." See *Letters*, p. 271.

[35]"Four-Letter Words," *Critical Quarterly*, III (Summer, 1961), 122.

[36]"Edmund Spenser, 1552-99," *Medieval and Renaissance Literature*, p. 141.

[37]*Allegory of Love*, p. 45.

[38]"Transposition," *They Asked for a Paper*, p. 173.

[39]"Psycho-analysis and Literary Criticism," *They Asked for a Paper*, p. 136.

[40]*The Personal Heresy*, p. 120; "Hamlet: The Prince or the Poem?" *They Asked for a Paper*, p. 70; "William Morris," *Rehabilitations and other Essays*, p. 43.

[41]Lewis spoke out sharply against evaluative criticism in *An Experiment in Criticism*, p. 129. "I suggest that a ten or twenty years' abstinence both from the reading and the writing of evaluative criticism might do us all a great deal of good."

[42]*The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer* (Oxford, 1926), 2nd edition, vol. 3, *Boethius and Troilus*, lxv, lists in detail the parallel passages of the *Romance of the Rose* and *Troilus*. Other studies are E. Koppel, "Chauceriana," *Anglia: Zeitschrift für englische Philologie*, XIV (1891), 238-265; Lisi Cipriani, "Studies in the Influence of the *Romance of the Rose* upon Chaucer," *PMLA*, XXII (1907), 552-595; D. S. Fansler, *Chaucer and the Roman de la Rose* (New York, 1914).

[43]*Oxford University Gazette*, LIX (October 12, 1928), 55. In another place, "The Idea of an 'English School'," *Rehabilitations*, p. 71, Lewis emphasizes the importance of the *Romance of the Rose* for English literature.

Twenty-five years later, Lewis reviewed sympathetically a book which complemented and demonstrated his own interest. Allegory of Love concerned itself mainly with part one of the Romance. The book Lewis reviewed, The Mirror of Love: a reinterpretation of "The Romance of the Rose, by Alan Gunn, seeks to demonstrate the poetic unity of the second part. Gunn's many references to Lewis' book are ample proof of Lewis' importance in criticism of the Romance. See Medium Aevum, XXII (February, 1953), 27-31.

[44]Letters, p. 127. Charles Williams, in his review of Allegory of Love, The Oxford Magazine, LX (February 25, 1937), 449, regards the chapter on the Romance of the Rose " . . . as good as it could be and far better than anything hitherto written in English on this all important matter which is too often taken for granted."

[45]Allegory of Love, p. 112.

[46]Allegory of Love, p. 123.

[47]Allegory of Love, p. 125.

[48]Allegory of Love, p. 157. I have not attempted an evaluation of the continuity of medievalism in Spenser. Lewis' complete writings on this topic are not yet available in published form, but are being supplemented at present by Alastair Fowler. According to a note in Medieval and Renaissance Literature, p. ix, Fowler is editing Lewis' Cambridge lectures on Spenser.

[49]"Learning and Gusto," New Statesman and Nation, XLVIII (October 30, 1954), 546. The TLS reviewer held a similar opinion: "Perhaps no chapter in Mr. Lewis' book is so well written, or with such zest, as that upon the end of the Middle Ages in Scotland," (September 17, 1954), p. 592.

[50]English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, p. 75.

[51]English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, pp. 75-76.

[52]English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, pp. 81, 92.

[53]See "Neoplatonism in the Poetry of Spenser," Medieval and Renaissance Literature, p. 160.

[54]For exponents of this point of view, see Bertrand Bronson, "Personification Reconsidered," ELH, XIV (September, 1947), 167; "The Scholar's Tale," TLS (January 7, 1965), p. 2; Louis Macneice, Varieties of Parable (Cambridge, England, 1965), p. 4.

[55]Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (Princeton, New Jersey, 1957), p. 53; Graham Hough, in A Preface to "The Faerie Queene" (New York, 1962), pp. 100-107, attempts a synthesis of both Lewis' and Frye's theories.

[56]"Allegoria, quam inversionem interpretatur, aut aliud verbis aliud sensu ostendid aut etiam interim contrarium," Institutio Oratoria, Loeb Classical Library, trans. H. E. Butler (London, 1922), Bk. VIII, vi, 44.

[57]They Asked for a Paper, p. 29. In this paper, Lewis follows carefully the course of medieval Biblical exegesis, quoting such standard sources as the Didascalicon of Hugh of St. Victor but without reaching the conclusions of Robertson and his school.

[58]Allegory of Love, p. 62.

[59]"De Audiendis Poetis," Medieval and Renaissance Literature, p. 9.

[60]Letters, p. 273.

IV. COURTLY LOVE IN MEDIEVAL LITERATURE

C. S. Lewis first attracted the attention of the larger academic world outside Oxford in 1932 with his distinguished essay, "What Chaucer Really Did to 'Il Filostrato'."[1] There Lewis defined what was to be a life-long interest, courtly love. The last item which Lewis wrote for publication before his death in 1963 had almost the same focus, but with a temporal shift to romantic love and marriage in the twentieth-century world.[2] The shift is significant, for it indicates in broad outline what I shall suggest in this chapter, that Lewis' first interest in the imaginative representation of courtly love in medieval literature ultimately gave place to a moral concern for the effect of this literary tradition on the modern love ethos. One of his love poems, "Old Poets Remembered," which seems to refer to his own belated but happy marriage to Joy Davidson who was dying of cancer at the time of their marriage, expresses succinctly the same pattern of change. After describing her power to move him to ecstasy or despair, Lewis affirms:

> Thus, what old poets told me about love
> (Tristram's obedience, Isoud's sovereignty . . .)
> Turns true in a dread mode I dreamed not of
> --What once I studied, now I learned to be;
>
> Taught, oh how late! in anguish, the response
> I might have made with exultation once.[3]

The experience of love has redirected his thoughts from "what old poets say" to life.

In this chapter, because of the dual scope of my subject, I shall be drawing on both Lewis' literary and ethical writings. Moreover, since my purpose is to describe his changing view on courtly love, I shall follow the advice of his successor at Cambridge, J. A. W. Bennett, and compare and contrast these volumes: ". . . a book in one genre will correct, illumine or amplify what is latent in another. Hence the opening chapters of the Allegory must now be read in the light of the closing pages of The Four Loves--where he retracts his view that passionate love was largely a literary phenomenon; . . . ."[4] Martin D'Arcy, himself the author of The Mind and Heart of Love, described the shift in another manner, but still the resulting emphasis is toward love in life. He suggested that Lewis changed his interest from the devil in The Screwtape Letters to a more positive view of love in The Four Loves. The latter, in Father D'Arcy's opinion, shows ". . . a profound religious understanding of our human nature."[5] My plan is to follow the path which led Lewis from The Allegory of Love to The Four Loves.

As a literary critic, Lewis first described The Allegory of Love, that is, the medieval literary form which the creative imagination made of its subject, courtly love. Love in allegorical literature was therefore considered by Lewis as subordinate to both topics considered in the previous two chapters and even, in a

manner, was dependent upon them.[6]

In the first chapter I suggested that Lewis' view of the medieval universe was initially dependent upon the hierarchical principle. Courtly love, as exemplified in medieval literature, was an inverted application of the usual hierarchy and established in place of the subordination of women a mock hierarchy which gave the lady the position of the lord. As Lewis describes it, "There is a service of love closely modelled on the service which a feudal vassal owes to his lord. The lover is the lady's 'man'. He addresses her as midons, which etymologically represents not 'my lady' but 'my lord'."[7] The love which inspires the medieval poet is first of all built upon a recognition of station.

Courtly love in medieval literature, furthermore, is an evidence of the medieval taste for ritual. Lewis' description of the universe of Paradise Lost emphasizes this quality and its relation to the rules of courtesy in which love was a part. The universe before the fall had the perfection of order: "The pattern deep hidden in the dance, hidden so deep that shallow spectators cannot see it, alone gives beauty to the wild, free gestures that fill it, ... The heavenly frolic arises from an orchestra which is in time; the rules of courtesy make perfect ease and freedom possible between those who obey them. . . . Unless we bear this in mind we shall not

understand either Comus or Paradise Lost, either the Faerie Queene or the Arcadia, or the Divine Comedy itself."[8] In such a universe of ritual and order, the rules for courtly lovers are "natural."

"Natural" too, in a ceremonious ethos, is the complex literary form known as allegory. For, in Lewis' view, the representation of sexual love in the Romance of the Rose gains in beauty from its allegorical association with the figure of a garden. In this allegory, the author ". . . and his readers, start with a fully conscious attention to the erotic material and then deliberately express it in the symbols. . . . It becomes clear that humanity has some motive other than concealment for comparing erotic experience to gardens and flowers: that the erotic experience, thus compared, becomes somehow more interesting--that it is borrowing attractiveness from the flowers, not they from it."[9] The courtly love tradition gains by the "borrowed attractiveness" and is unfolded in the allegorical movements of the garden of love. In a B.B.C. radio interview, Lewis was even more explicit about the necessary link between allegory and love. He was asked, "As the authority on The Allegory of Love, Mr. Lewis, what is your attitude to the detailed, non-allegorical description of the act of love in literature?" "To describe the act of love in detail without resorting to allegory," answered Lewis,

"one is restricted to three choices: the language of the nursery, the language of the gutter, or the language of science--all are equally unsatisfactory."[10] Although we may not agree that the alternatives Lewis offers are all-inclusive, his statement is supported by many literary examples from Guillaume de Lorris to Spenser.

The relationship of courtly love to the allegorical mode is, however, a more complex one than simple aesthetic affinity. Lewis maintains, as I shall subsequently explain, that allegory is both the form and the means for developing the ideas of courtly love in English literature. The rules of courtly love were known before Lewis and were often explicated with more subtlety than he offered. It is not there that Lewis' contribution can be found. The TLS reviewer of The Allegory of Love maintains that his originality lies ". . . in his approach to the intellectual method by which the change [in the ethos of love] was accomplished and expressed. (The two processes are indistinguishable and inseparable.) This intellectual method, so often alien to us today who take its results for granted, is the method of allegory."[11] English love poetry from Chaucer through Spenser is the field in which this change was accomplished.

Before I illustrate the proof of this change in the ethos of love, perhaps it would be well to review briefly the chief tenets of courtly love, according to

Lewis. After sketching the possible classical origins of this sentiment in Ovid, he dismisses the whole question of post-classical origins such as Celtic or Arabic influences. His judgment is ". . . that the efforts of scholars have so far failed to find an origin for the content of Provençal love poetry."[12] But from the literary evidence available he posits the following description:

> The sentiment, of course, is love, but love of a highly specialized sort, whose characteristics may be enumerated as Humility, Courtesy, Adultery, and the Religion of Love. The lover is always abject. Obedience to his lady's lightest wish, however whimsical, and silent acquiescence in her rebukes, however unjust, are the only virtues he dares to claim. . . . [Love] is only possible to those who are, in the old sense of the word, polite. It thus becomes, from one point of view the flower, from another the seed, of all those noble usages which distinguish the gentle from the vilein: only the courteous can love, but it is love that makes them courteous. Yet this love, though neither playful nor licentious in its expression, is always what the nineteenth century called 'dishonourable' love. The poet normally addresses another man's wife, and the situation is so carelessly accepted that he seldom concerns himself with her husband; his real enemy is the rival.[13]

This summary of the chief rules of love, while not original with Lewis, was perhaps a more convenient source for English readers than the works of French and German scholars upon whom Lewis depended. In a pioneer study of courtly love, Gaston Paris explained the four principal characteristics of love, corresponding broadly with Lewis' classification. Paris asserted that courtly love was adulterous, demanded humility on the lover's part,

was the art of courteous men, and demanded rules for progress.[14] Lewis' reference to Paris and other foreign scholars indicates that he recognized his debt to their research.

Since Lewis' conviction at this time (the time of the writing of The Allegory of Love, the 1930's) was that courtly love was primarily a literary sentiment, it was natural that he soon would apply his description to literary examples. Those which he chose first, Lancelot by Chrétien de Troyes and De Arte Honeste Amandi by Andreas Capellanus, are, respectively, the narrative and the theoretical application of his description.

Building on Gaston Paris' emphasis on the primacy of Chrétien for the courtly love tradition, Lewis went further and suggested that Chrétien's Lancelot also contained the forms of the allegorical tradition. Paris had written that "Le Chevalier de la Charrette me paraît en effect avoir, dans l'histoire de la littérature française au moyen âge et particulièrement du chapitre qui nous occupe, une importance plus grande que celle qu'on lui a d'ordinaire attribuée. L'orginalité de ce poème, une fois la question du fond et du sens primitif mise à part, consiste dans la façon dont il présente ses personnages, dans les mobiles qu'il donne à'leurs actions, et notamment dans la conception qu'il nous offre de l'amour."[15] But for Lewis, Chrétien

> . . . was one of the first explorers of the human heart, and is therefore rightly to be numbered among the fathers of the novel of sentiment. But these psychological passages have usually one characteristic which throws special light on the subject of this book. Chrétien can hardly turn to the inner world without, at the same time, turning to allegory. . . . When Lancelot hesitates before mounting the cart, Chrétien represents his indecision as a debate between Reason which forbids, and Love which urges him on. A later poet would have told us directly--though not, after all, without metaphor--what Lancelot was feeling: an earlier poet would not have attempted such a scene at all.[16]

That, in this early book, Lewis chose to emphasize the seeds of allegory in Lancelot is another indication of one of his primary assumptions about courtly love; its nature is essentially to be considered as a literary phenomenon.

Of the other important example of the courtly love tradition, Lewis writes with equal originality. If Chrétien's work illustrates the affinity of courtly love and allegory, Andreas may be taken as an example of the religion of love. Lewis affirmed the absolute incompatibility of courtly love and Christianity, a rift which came to be healed only in the poetry of Spenser by the workings of the allegorical tradition. Although Lewis used Andreas as one authority, he did not elevate him to a position of primacy, as some subsequent critics have done. In fact, he cautioned against the tendency to regard De Arte Honeste Amandi as a work which

contains the secrets of medieval love.

> This, I submit, is to put its claims too high. Courtly love itself does not suffice to explain the secrets of medieval civilization and the treatise of Andreas does not, in all senses, explain Courtly love. The formal, and perhaps whimsical, systematization of his book makes it an extremely useful text for the modern scholar who wishes to illustrate the sentiment in its most distinctive and paradoxical form; but when we want to understand this sentiment from within, to think ourselves back into the attitude of the medieval lover, we may find better guidance from the poets, and not always from those poets who carry the feeling to its furthest extremity.[17]

Lewis' use of the book is, therefore, as one illustration of the courtly love tradition and its paradoxical relation to Christianity.

In the first two parts of Andreas' book, the rift between Christianity and courtly love is implicit. The religion of love emerges to take the place of orthodoxy. Even so, the chaplain Andreas describes this substitute religion with sympathy and beauty, for, according to Lewis, he is his best and most serious self in the passages ". . . where he dwells upon the power of love to call forth all knightly and courtly excellences: love which makes beautiful the <u>horridus</u> and <u>incultus</u>, which advances the most lowly born to true nobility, and humbles the proud. . . . [For] when Andreas talks of the <u>bonum in saeculo</u> he means what he says. He means the really good things: courage and courtesy and generosity, as against baseness."[18] Writing as a secular man, Andreas affirms the human values of the courtly love traditions.

But, as the work of a Christian and a cleric, Andreas' treatise is more enigmatic. To the question, "How does the final book, which is the palinode for the first two, affect the previous presentation?," Lewis answers that it represents a contradictory position. Andreas affirms human values but knows that ultimately they too must be seen sub specie aeternitatis. Lewis' description of this relationship is one of the rare passages in literary history where creativity touches criticism:

> But of course there is for Andreas, in a cool hour, no doubt as to which of the two worlds is the real one, and in this he is typical of the Middle Ages. When Frauendienst succeeds in fusing with religion, as in Dante, unity is restored to the mind, and love can be treated with a solemnity that is whole-hearted. But where it is not so fused, it can never, under the shadow of its tremendous rival, be more than a temporary truancy. It may be solemn, but its solemnity is only for the moment. It may be touching, but it never forgets that there are sorrows and dangers before which those of love must be ready, when the moment comes, to give way. . . . The Chaplain's palinode does not stand alone. In the last stanzas of the book of Troilus, in the harsher recantation that closes the life and work of Chaucer as a whole, in the novel close of Malory, it is the same. We hear the bell clang; and the children, suddenly hushed and grave, and a little frightened, troop back to their master.[19]

Andreas does not underestimate the tension of a Christian life. De Arte Honeste Amandi is his attempt to praise the best of both worlds of his day, but with all Christians he recognized the supremacy of the things of God.

In an earlier review of a book by Sir Edmund Chambers, Lewis explains how the medieval hierarchy of values operates, with special reference to Malory. For modern critics (Lewis mentions Vinaver and Chambers), the dichotomy is between worldly-bad values and spiritual-good values. "But Malory has a three-storeyed mind--a scale of bad-good-best (Mark, Launcelot, Galahad) which, if read backwards, becomes of course good-bad-worst. It will be seen that the middle term may appear sometimes as 'good' and sometimes as 'bad', without any inconsistency. He is thus perfectly serious about the nobility of Launcelot and of courtly love--the 'old love' so much more faithful and patient than 'love nowadays': and he is equally serious about the yet higher law which cuts across the courtly world in the Grail books."[20] Lewis is emphasizing here, as in his comments on Andreas Capellanus, the moral heresy of courtly love. When joined with his description of the allegory of love, we are able to see that this emphasis continued throughout Lewis' discussions of courtly love as a literary tradition.[21]

Although it would be impossible for me to trace here the full history of criticism of courtly love since Lewis' first book appeared in 1936, it is necessary to indicate some broad outlines. Lewis' book emphasized the disparity between courtly love and Christianity.

Subsequent criticism, the work of such men as Alexander Denomy, has devoted much attention to the origin of this rift.[22] Others denied that this rift did, in fact, exist in English literature. In a collection of essays edited by Lewis himself, Gervase Mathew states that adultery was not a feature of courtly love in knightly romances of fourteenth-century England.[23] To resolve the disparity in another way, John J. Parry in the introduction to his translation, The Art of Courtly Love, stressed that Andreas had little concern with spiritual values and thus his retraction is a mere convention and lacks any sincerity.[24] For the opposite reason, D. W. Robertson Jr. in his book, A Preface to Chaucer, also assumes the rift to be an imagined one, at least in the case of Andreas Capellanus who, he says, never seriously or without contradiction presented the doctrine of courtly love. Andreas always spoke as a Christian.[25] Perhaps a more productive line has been taken by critics, writing from a philosophic, ethical, or religious viewpoint, who have investigated further the nature of love itself, of which courtly love is but one manifestation. Martin D'Arcy's The Mind and Heart of Love is an example of this interest, with an acknowledged debt to Lewis.[26]

In a consideration of Lewis' own contribution, the final importance of his first writing about courtly love lies not so much in the theory but in its application

to medieval literature. His achievement here is not only that

> . . . the pages on Spenser have brought _The Faerie Queene_ to life, reinstated it as the poetic force it once was but had not been for generations; or that the Chaucer chapter is the most living and genial treatment of _Troilus and Criseyde_ that we have seen; but also that the book [_The Allegory of Love_] is itself an allegory of love, a scholarly romance, in which a journey among works of poetry, many of them neglected, among erotic and scholastic treatises, most of them little read, is woven together into an imaginative and self-subsistent whole, and made available to the literate common reader as this material had never been before.[27]

My next task is to follow with Lewis the dual themes of allegory and love in medieval literature, indicating how the method, allegory, effected a change in the emotion, love. Of the writers Lewis studies, I have selected three for special attention, Chaucer, Gower, and Spenser.

For Lewis, Chaucer was the poet of _Troilus_, the poet of love. His preference for this poem was expressed early and steadily maintained. Writing to a school friend, Arthur Greeves, the young Lewis proclaims with a finality possible only to the young, "I have now read all the Tales of Chaucer which I ever expected to read and feel that I may consider the book as finished. . .some of them are quite impossible. On the whole, with one or two exceptions, like the Knight's Tale and the Franklin's, he is disappointing when you get to know him. He has most of the faults of the Middle Ages--garrulity and coarseness--

without their romantic charm. . . ."[28] He relented, however, and read Chaucer again, this time Troilus, which he described even twenty years before The Allegory of Love as "much more in my line than the Canterbury Tales."[29] When he approached this poem later, it was as an heir to the courtly love tradition and an inheritor of the psychological insights of allegory, in other words, as a medieval poem.

Lewis' discussion of Troilus is divided between his contribution to Essays and Studies in 1931 and The Allegory of Love in 1936. In the first article, his thesis is that "Chaucer approached his work as the poet of courtly love. He not only modified his source so as to make it a more accurate representation in action of the orthodox erotic code, but he also went out of his way to emphasize the didactic elements. Andreas Capellanus had given instructions to lovers; Guillaume de Lorris had given instructions veiled and decorated by allegory; Chaucer carries the process a stage further and gives instruction by example in the course of a concrete story."[30] Lewis then illustrates, by a comparison of Troilus with its Italian source, the changes which Chaucer made for the tenets of love.

By the time he wrote The Allegory of Love, Lewis was ready to consider the more subtle implication of Troilus as a hero of the allegorical tradition which he

tended to neglect in his earlier article. To review with Lewis:

> The reader will remember how, in Chrétien, the story of external happenings and the story (already partly allegorized) of inner experience, proceeded side by side. We have seen how the two elements fell apart, and how the second element was treated independently in the Romance of the Rose, and raised to a higher power. Guillaume de Lorris deepens, diversifies, and subtilizes the psychology of Chrétien; . . . . [Chaucer] can re-combine the elements which had fallen apart after Chrétien, because Chrétien's combination had been premature. Allegory has taught him how to dispense with allegory, and the time is now ripe for the great love-story which the Middle Ages have so long been in labour to produce.[31]

The allegory which intervened between Chrétien and Chaucer had brought increased psychological truth to the representation of love.

Perhaps I should point out here an idea which I stressed in Chapter Three, that for Lewis the method of allegory was the method par excellence for representing the inner reality of the soul. It was the method for portraying in verbal skirmishes the struggles of the inner world for virtue and love. Allegory, therefore, had the advantage of bringing the reader into close contact with reality, and was, in contrast to the modern view of it, a realistic mode in literature.[32]

Lewis' method is to approach Troilus primarily from the vantage point of the Romance of the Rose. For Cryseide, Lewis cannot find any single equivalent in the allegory. She is rather the sum total of the reactions

of the heroine. Her ". . . analogue is the nameless heroine of the Roman, not any one of the personifications by whom that heroine is displayed; and those who have followed Chaucer most closely in his devout study of her, will best understand Cryseide. . . . That she is not a wanton, still less a calculating wanton, need hardly be argued. The belief that she saw through the wiles of Pandarus, and only appeared to be led by circumstances while in fact she went the way she had intended from the beginning, can be held only in defiance of the text."[33] By the rules of courtly love, Cryseide's sin lay not in granting the Rose to Troilus but in her subsequent betrayal of him.

In the Romance of the Rose the reactions of the heroine are analyzed with psychological subtlety. Using the insights gained there, Chaucer combined the personifications of that allegory into a heroine whose only fault lay in her fear, ". . . fear of loneliness, of old age, of death, of love, and of hostility; and of everything, indeed, that can be feared."[34] For this failing, Lewis is generous with his forgiveness.

Pandarus is also an heir to the tradition; Lewis emphasizes his position both in the court of love and in the allegorical garden of love. In one of those brilliant and witty descriptions which seem to cut to the heart of his character, Lewis paints him as, above all, a practical

man. "Everyone has met the modern equivalent of Pandarus. When you are in the hands of such a man you can travel first class through the length and breadth of England on a third-class ticket; policemen and gamekeepers will fade away before you, placated yet unbribed; noble first-floor bedrooms will open for you in hotels that have sworn they are absolutely full; and drinks will be forthcoming at hours when the rest of the world goes thirsty."[35] He is therefore not to be viewed solely as the object of our laughter.

His function corresponds to the allegorical figure who expounds the doctrine of love. His message is important, however much we may laugh at the manner of its delivery. He is too much of a realist to be unaware of the consequences of romantic love. Lewis suggests that his position is ". . . inside the magic circle of courtly love--a devout, even a pedantic and lachrymose, exponent of it. But he, like every one else, except the lovers themselves for short moments in the fury of their kindness, sees also the hard or banal lineaments of the workaday world showing through the enchanted haze; . . . ."[36] This comment is important, for it is the beginning of an emphasis which will ultimately lead Lewis to affirm that in Spenser the reality of married love has conquered the "enchanted haze" of the courtly tradition of adultery.

Of the third person in the poem, Troilus himself,

Lewis has little to say. His opinion is that ". . . the drawing of Troilus' character is no principal part of Chaucer's purpose; that about Troilus there still stands something of the anonymity of the Dreamer, the mere 'I' of the allegories."[37] He is still, in Lewis' opinion, the embodiment of the brave, courteous lover whose valour never is in doubt.

In his final evaluation, Lewis returns to the emphasis, noted earlier, to the effect of the real world on the courtly tradition. In Chaucer's poem both are kept in view. This juxtaposition is especially apparent in Book Three where

> . . . with Chaucer we are rooted in the purifying complexities of the real world. Behind the lovers--who are people, 'rational substances,' as well as lovers--lies the whole history of their love, and all its ardours and defections are kept well before us up to the very moment of consummation: before them lies the morning and the beautiful antiphonal <u>alba</u>, remade from old Provencal models, which they will then utter. Outside is the torrential 'smoky' rain which Chaucer does not allow us to forget; and who does not see what an innocent smugness, as of a children's hiding-place, it draws over the whole scene? Finally, beside them, is Pandarus, so close to them in outlook, and yet so far removed: Pandarus, the go-between, the bridge not only between Troilus and Cryseide but also between the world of romance and the world of comedy.[38]

Lewis' approach to <u>Troilus</u> has made Chaucer a poet who refined the sense of love, a traditionalist who benefited from his predecessors in the allegory of love, and, above all, a realist who "brought the old romance of adultery to the very frontiers of the modern . . . romance of

marriage."[39] This criticism is of seminal importance in Lewis' thesis concerning the effect of the allegorical form on the modern ethos of love.

After his description of Chaucer's contribution to the allegory of love, Lewis continued with an approach to Gower which also places him within the tradition of allegory and of courtly love. His model in Confessio Amantis, formally considered, was the Romance of the Rose; his instructional guide was Andreas Capellanus.[40] "Gower comes before us as a poet of courtly love; and I think he makes good his claim. He has not indeed written a love poem comparable to Troilus or the first part of the Romance of the Rose. But he has his own contribution to make. In his own way he works side by side with Chaucer to realize what Guillaume de Lorris had rendered possible."[41] The union of romantic love and the actual world is the result in Confessio Amantis. But it is a special kind of union, different in its way from the palinode of Chaucer or Andreas. In contrast to these solutions, Gower turns to the narrative requirements of his story. Lewis maintains that the

> . . . claims of the objective moral law--of Resoun as the Middle Ages said--must, in the end, be faced. Hence the last book of Andreas, and the conclusion of Troilus and Cryseide. Gower, as well as another, is faced with this necessity. For him, as for Chaucer, the love which he celebrates is a sin, and in the lover Will has usurped dominion over Resoun. Gower is not enough of a philosopher to achieve, like Dante, or even to attempt, like Alanus, any reconciliation between the claims of his two worlds: but he is much too

> careful and sincere an artist to be content with some formal palinode which would stultify the whole of the rest of his poem. He solves the problem by keeping his eye on the object. He finds in his own experience--the experience of an old man--how Life itself manages the necessary palinode: and then manages his in the same way. It is Old Age which draws the sting of love, and his poem describes the process of this disappointing mercy.[42]

The perfection of a single line of poetry, "Homeward a softe pas I went," is for Lewis a palinode whose coming had been prepared for by Chrétien, Andreas, and Guillaume de Lorris.

It is two centuries between this stage in the allegory of love and the next and final one, between Chaucer and Gower and Spenser. Lewis does not, as I am doing, dismiss the intervening allegorists of love in silence. But, in my judgment, Spenser is the next major contributor to the pattern I am tracing, the transformation of the literary ethos of adulterous courtly love to married love by the allegorical mode of poetry.

Edmund Spenser belongs by birth date and affiliation to the later Elizabethan era. But, because of his position as the culminator of the tradition of love which Lewis traced, it is necessary for me to include a discussion of Spenser's allegory of love, The Faerie Queene, in this study which otherwise has avoided non-medieval interests. Lewis evidently felt a similar need to justify his inclusion of Spenser, since he makes explicit his reasons for doing so. His interest is first of all in

allegory and Spenser's poem when ". . . it is allegorical at all it is radically and momentously allegorical, and continues the medieval impulse whether under medieval guidance or not. The second answer is more important. I am trying to tell the history not only of the form, allegory, but also of the sentiment, courtly love; and in the latter story Spenser is not so much part of my subject as one of my masters or collaborators. The last phase of that story--the final defeat of courtly love by the romantic conception of marriage--occupies the third book of The Faerie Queene and much of the fourth."[43] The road to that culminating allegory has brought us closer and closer to the realization which Lewis affirmed originally, that allegory is a valid mode of representing inner states which must be recognized as realities. The closer the original subject of allegory, courtly love, came to the reality of life, the more tempered by reality it became.

Lewis' thesis, that Spenser abandoned the adultery of courtly love in favor of married love, rests upon his examination of the third and fourth books of The Faerie Queene. Malecasts and Busirane are presented as the figures of courtly love. The struggle of Britomart (married love) to escape their dwellings is, therefore, ". . . the final struggle between the romance of marriage and the romance of adultery."[44] Lewis skillfully traces

the history of courtly love poetry in the trappings of the House of Busirane; each decoration has its equivalent in the allegories of love. Thus when ". . . Britomart rescues Amoret from this place of death she is ending some five centuries of human experience, predominantly painful. The only thing Spenser does not know is that Britomart is the daughter of Busirane--that his ideal of married love grew out of courtly love."[45] The pattern indicated earlier has thus reached its conclusion in Spenser, who both used and transcended the tradition of the allegory of love.[46]

So far, I have been considering the literary examples of the special kind of sexual love which we have come to call courtly love. But, even while doing so, I have made reference to ethical judgments concerning the evil of adultery and the good of married love. It is apparent that these judgments are implicit in Lewis' criticism of the allegory of love, for the poet who effected the change from courtly love to married love, Edmund Spenser, draws Lewis' highest praise. It is this end, married love, toward which he has been tending. And in the final passage of <u>The Allegory of Love</u> the moral concern becomes explicit and remains henceforth his chief focus of interest in writing about sexual love. After praising the work of Spenser in giving us the romantic conception of marriage he complains that

> . . . all that Britomart [married love] stands for was platitude to our fathers. It is platitude no longer. The whole conception is now being attacked. Feminism in politics, reviving asceticism in religion, animalism in imaginative literature, and, above all, the discoveries of the psycho-analysts, have undermined that monogamic idealism about sex which served us for three centuries. Whether society will gain or lose by the revolution, I need not try to predict; but Spenser ought to gain. What once was platitude should now have for some the brave appeal of a cause nearly lost, and for others the interest of a highly specialized historical phenomenon--the peculiar flower of a peculiar civilization, important whether for good or ill and well worth our understanding.[47]

This statement, published in 1936, was indicative of the moral emphasis which Lewis' subsequent writings on love were to have. By 1943, he was able to say of courtly love as a literary topic, "I leave the question to those now working on a subject with which I have somewhat lost touch."[48] He had pursued the matter past its literary boundaries.

Love became for Lewis a matter of extra-literary consideration; no longer was he content to confine himself to its literary expressions. Although he did not make this about-face explicit until a very late book, The Four Loves, published in 1960, it was implicit in all his writings about sexual love between 1936 when The Allegory of Love appeared and the later date. In The Four Loves, Lewis wrote, "Years ago when I wrote about medieval love-poetry and described its strange, half make-believe, 'religion of love,' I was blind enough to treat this as

an almost purely literary phenomenon. I know better now."[49] In the intervening years, Lewis had continuously written of what he considered the declining moral condition of the love ethos, and had himself been married for the first time, in 1957.

Whatever else Lewis may have been, he was undeniably a traditionalist. His first book of literary criticism was subtitled A Study in Medieval Tradition. So it was with his moral and religious writings, which continued to manifest his interest in the modern evidence of the courtly love tradition. Even in his earliest works, there is evidence that he considered this tradition as an antidote to modern eroticism. More specifically, Lewis' criticism of sexual ethics was permeated with his view that modern love would do well if it returned to the principle of hierarchy as used by the courtly love tradition, and if it retained a little more of the "ritual freedom" of medieval times. He maintained that

> . . . courtly love itself, in spite of all its shabby origins and pedantic rules, is at bottom more agreeable to those elements in human, or at least in European, nature which last longest, than the cynical Latin Gallantries of Boccaccio. The world of Chrétien, of Guillaume de Lorris, and of Chaucer, is nearer to the world universal, is less of a closed system, than the world of Ovid, of Congreve, of Anatole France. . . . The love-lore of Andreas, though a narrow stream, is a stream tending to the universal sea. Its waters move. For real stagnancy and isolation we must turn to the decorative lakes dug out far inland at such a mighty cost by Mr. George Moore; to the more popular corporation swimming baths of Dr. Marie Stopes; or to the teeming marshlands

> of the late D. H. Lawrence, whose depths the wisest knows not and on whose bank the hart gives up his life rather than plunge in:
> Þær mæg nihta gehwaem miðwundor seon
> Fyr on flode![50]

In both instances, Lewis (as a Christian) made reference to the tradition as exemplified or "purified" in married love.

The hierarchical principle should operate, according to Lewis, in sexual love both in the relationship of husband and wife and in the place of this love in a total human life. Of the first Lewis writes that this lack of feminine submission ". . . is the tragi-comedy of the modern woman; taught by Freud to consider the act of love the most important thing in life, and then inhibited by feminism from the internal surrender which alone can make it a complete emotional success. Merely for the sake of her own erotic pleasure, to go no further, some degree of obedience and humility seems to be (normally) necessary on the woman's part."[51] The medieval principle of station is a better pattern of sexual relations.

Furthermore, Lewis complains that our modern conception of human love has elevated the sexual instinct to totally unreasonable proportions. Quoting Denis deRougemont's book L'Amour et l'Occident (which he admired for its ethical support of his own position), Lewis maintains "l'amour cesse d'être un demon quand il cesse d'être un dieu."[52] In another place Lewis describes the

modern condition as one in which there is rampant among us a ". . . serious sex worship--quite different from the cheery lechery endemic in our species-- . . . ."[53] The Christian ideal of the man as the head of the family, insofar as it was the actual medieval condition, is Lewis' description of the hierarchy of married love.[54]

A supplementary proof of Lewis' commitment to the hierarchy of love is the arrangement of his book, The Four Loves. His chapters discuss the kinds of love from "Likings and Loves for the Sub-human" to "Charity." Since Lewis has come now to regard love chiefly as an experience and no longer only a literary tradition, perhaps I could draw an example from his own experience also. He describes in his letters the growth of his love for his wife. "It is nice to have arrived at all this by something which began in Agape, proceeded to Philia, then became pity, and only after that, Eros. As if the highest of these, Agape, had successfully undergone the sweet humiliations of an incarnation."[55] The hierarchy had been approached from above.

Lewis wrote with special emphasis on the loss of ceremony, art, or ritual in the modern ethos of love. For him, this quality had enabled medieval lovers to exist in freedom and with the touch of joy which he saw to be sadly lacking now. We have instead ". . . achieved the feat, which I should have thought impossible, of making the

whole subject a bore. Poor Aphrodite! they have sand-papered most of the Homeric laughter off her face."[56] Laughter-loving Aphrodite has disappeared also in the writing of those who attempt to use in a serious way the vocabulary of the sexual joke. Lewis' contribution to a discussion of Lady Chatterly's Lover suggests this opinion. When Lawrence attempted to use four-letter words seriously, his ". . . usage is a rebellion against language. Lady Chatterly has made short work of a prosecution by the Crown. It still has to face more formidable judges. Nine of them, and all goddesses."[57] The ethics of love in the modern world have become so serious that even the vocabulary of jokes can no longer be allowed to remain untouched; all must be serious. Lewis, on the other hand, maintained that love, like life, is an art which must be practiced with a certain playfulness and freedom acquired through familiarity with its ritual.[58] Thus modern lovers could learn much from the "game" quality of medieval courtly love.

Lewis traced the development of the literary tradition of courtly love from its medieval sources, through its transformation by means of allegory, to its final literary glory in Spenser. But, thereafter his emphasis shifted from literature to life. His task became one of restoring to the love ethos of modern society the best qualities of the earlier tradition. For the student of

medieval literature, Lewis' original contribution is his first one, but ultimately, his second emphasis may prove more important for western society.

Notes to Chapter IV

[1]Essays and Studies, XVII (1933), 56-75.

[2]"We Have No 'Right to Happiness'," The Saturday Evening Post, CCXXXVI (December 21-28, 1963), 10-12.

[3]Poems, ed. Walter Hooper (New York, 1964), p. 109.

[4]The Humane Medievalist, p. 27.

[5]"These Things Called Love," New York Times Book Review (July 31, 1960), p. 4.

[6]Admirers of Lewis have also suggested the importance of love as a dominant theme in his medieval criticism. See Bennett, The Humane Medievalist, p. 11; and John Lawlor, "The Tutor and the Scholar," Light on C. S. Lewis, ed. Jocelyn Gibb (London, 1965), p. 82. Lawlor makes what I consider to be an exaggerated claim for the importance of courtly love when he states, "if his [Lewis'] work in English studies is to be advanced, two starting-points offer themselves for reinvestigation--medieval fyne amour, and rebelliousness romanticism."

[7]Allegory of Love, p. 2. Charles Singleton in his review of The Discarded Image, New York Review of Books (July 30, 1964), p. 11, has made an interesting comparison between Lewis' interest in courtly love as "truancy" from the Christian tradition and Lewis' affirmation of the escape offered by the introduction of the longaevi in his orderly model of the medieval universe. Singleton suggests that ". . . Lewis was probably at his best always when he was dealing with a truancy."

[8]Preface to "Paradise Lost," p. 81. In "Hero and Leander," the Warton Lecture on English Poetry read on February 20, 1952 and printed in The Proceedings of the British Academy, XXXVIII (1952), 22-37, Lewis again stressed the ceremonial nature of English life and social customs.

[9]"Psycho-analysis and Literary Criticism," They Asked for a Paper, pp. 131-132.

[10]Quoted by George Bailey, "My Oxford Tutor: C. S. Lewis," The Reporter, XXV (April 23, 1964), 40.

[11]"A History of Romantic Love: Provencal Sentiment in English Poetry," TLS (June 6, 1936), p. 475.

[12]Allegory of Love, p. 11. In a review of John Jay Parry's translation, The Art of Courtly Love, written seven years later, Lewis reiterates his scepticism about Arabic origins. See RES, XIV (January, 1932), 77-79.

[13]Allegory of Love, pp. 2-3.

[14]"Etudes sur les romans de la Table Ronde. Lancelot du Lac, II: La Conte de la Charette," Romania, XII (1883), 518-519. Although some reviewers of Allegory of Love censured Lewis for omitting a bibliography, he has included in the notes ample evidence of previous scholarship on courtly love. Besides the article by Paris noted above in which courtly love was first defined and named as such, Lewis cites such other sources as Etienne Gilson, La Théologie Mystique de Saint Bernard (Paris, 1934), Appendix IV, a study of the relationship of religion and courtly love; Alfred Jeanroy, La Poésie Lyrique des Troubadours, 2 vols. (Paris, 1934), a study of the individual Provencal poets and the important courts at which they wrote; and Edward Wechssler, Das Kulturproblem des Minnesangs (Halle, 1909), the German classic on courtly love which emphasized its relation to Christianity.

[15]"Etudes sur les romans de la Table Ronde," p. 516.

[16]Allegory of Love, pp. 29-30.

[17]Review of John Jay Parry's translation of Andreas' treatise, RES, XIV (January, 1932), 77-78.

[18]Allegory of Love, pp. 39, 42.

[19]Allegory of Love, pp. 42-43. In Letters, p. 127, Lewis affirms another religious paradox. Writing informally to his father about the progress of his first book, he says, ". . . the mediaeval idea of love, . . . is a very paradoxical business indeed when you go into it; for on the one hand it is extremely super-sensual and refined, and on the other it is an absolute point of honour that the lady should be someone else's wife, as Dante and Beatrice, Launcelot and Guinevere etc. . . ."

[20]Review of E. K. Chambers, Sir Thomas Wyatt and Some Collected Studies, Medium Aevum, III (October, 1934), 239.

[21]Some reviewers of Allegory of Love were harsh on Lewis' treatment of courtly love. But, in fact, his explanation of this theme is less important and admittedly

less original than his attention to the allegories of love as an attempt to transform the love ethos of Western Europe. See, for example, William Empson, "Love and the Middle Ages," The Spectator, CLVII (September 4, 1936), 389; Kathleen Tillotson, RES, o.s. XIII (October, 1937), 477; Edgar Knowlton, JEGP, XXXVI (January, 1937), 125.

[22]The Heresy of Courtly Love (New York, 1947).

[23]"Marriage and Amour Courtois in Late Fourteenth-Century England," in Essays Presented to Charles Williams (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1966), pp. 128-135.

[24]New York, 1941, p. 18.

[25]Princeton, New Jersey, 1962, p. 442.

[26]New York, 1947, p. 12.

[27]"The Scholar's Tale," TLS (January 7, 1965), p. 2.

[28]Letters, p. 29.

[29]Letters, p. 31.

[30]"What Chaucer Really Did to 'Il Filostrato'," p. 66.

[31]Allegory of Love, pp. 177-178.

[32]See Chapter III, pp. 44-46.

[33]Allegory of Love, p. 182. Lewis' emphasis on the relationship between Troilus and the Romance of the Rose is, of course, not original, but his extensive explication of this relationship is an original contribution. Earlier in this century, William G. Dodd, in Courtly Love in Chaucer and Gower (Boston, 1913), traced the system of courtly love from the Romance to Troilus, but stressed the presence of the system rather than the influence of the allegory of love. Skeat's edition of Chaucer (Oxford, 1926), 2nd edition, vol. 2, lxv, lists many parallel passages in the two works. The list which Skeat began has grown, until in F. N. Robinson's edition of the works of Chaucer (Boston, 1957), the number of parallel passages in each book of the Troilus has about doubled. Also there has appeared, after the publication of the Allegory of Love, a single volume devoted to the topic, Thomas A. Kirby's Chaucer's "Troilus": A Study in Courtly Love (University, Louisiana, 1940). For additional references on this topic, see note 42, Chapter III.

[34]*Allegory of Love*, p. 185.

[35]*Allegory of Love*, p. 190.

[36]*Allegory of Love*, p. 194.

[37]*Allegory of Love*, p. 195.

[38]*Allegory of Love*, pp. 196-197.

[39]*Allegory of Love*, p. 197. Roger Sharrock, in "Second Thoughts: C. S. Lewis on Chaucer's *Troilus*," *Essays in Criticism*, VIII (April, 1958), 128, criticizes Lewis' ". . . emphasis on the importance of the courtly love code, and (ii) his omission of any serious consideration of the concluding stanzas and their implication. . . . They [the emphasis and omission] make it possible for him to ignore that whole side of Chaucer's purpose which would seem to make it a great poem about human frailty and exposedness, tender in its recognition of the limited human goodness of passionate love, as of other limited human ends, but agonisingly aware of the limitation: . . . ." Reviewers of *Allegory of Love* recognized the genius of this section on *Troilus*. For example, Charles Williams maintained that of ". . . the essays on individual poets, that on Chaucer--it is mainly a presentation of *Troilus and Criseyde*--is the most profoundly moving; and it achieves in some of its descriptive passages of mental states a vivid and poignant kind of prose-harmony which no reader will easily forget: compare for example, the remarks on the end of *Troilus* (pp. 195-196) which begin, 'The end of *Troilus* is the great example in our literature of pathos pure and unrelieved.' Never has this great mediaeval epical romance been so sensitively, so truly presented: and the comparison with the *Romance of the Rose* strikes out a line of thought which will be new and important to many." *Oxford Magazine*, LX (February 25, 1937), 450.

[40]*Allegory of Love*, pp. 198-199.

[41]*Allegory of Love*, p. 213.

[42]*Allegory of Love*, p. 218.

[43]*Allegory of Love*, p. 298.

[44]*Allegory of Love*, p. 340.

[45]*Allegory of Love*, p. 341.

[46]Lewis also considered, somewhat peripherally, the development of the courtly love tradition in Gavin Douglas, Shakespeare, Chapman, Donne, and in modern times, Charles Williams. See, respectively, English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, p. 78; English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, p. 505 and a review of John Vyvyan's book, Shakespeare and the Rose of Love, The Listener, LXIV (June 7, 1960), 30; "Hero and Leander," Proceedings of the British Academy, XXXVIII (1952), 28; "Donne and Love Poetry in the Seventeenth Century," in Seventeenth-Century Studies Presented to Sir Herbert Grierson (Oxford, 1938), pp. 73-74, and English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, p. 549; and Arthurian Torso (London, 1947), pp. 118 ff.

[47]Allegory of Love, p. 360.

[48]RES, XIX (January, 1943), 78.

[49]New York, 1960, p. 154.

[50]"What Chaucer Really Did to 'Il Filostrato'," p. 75.

[51]"Equality," The Spectator, CLXXI (August 27, 1943), 192.

[52]Letters, p. 266. Lewis reviewed de Rougemont's book in Theology, XL (June, 1940), 459-461. His comments indicated that, although he was extremely doubtful about the supposed Catharist origins of courtly love as suggested by de Rougemont, he was in complete agreement concerning the results of this tradition on the modern ideas of love and marriage.

[53]"Revival or Decay?" Punch, CCXXXV (July 9, 1958), 38. Another statement of the same idea is contained in Lewis' article, "First and Second Things," Time and Tide, XXIII (June 27, 1942), 519-520.

[54]Letters, pp. 184-185. In more personal reflections on the death of his wife, Lewis moderates this hierarchy and affirms that ". . . an entire marriage reconciles them. . . . Jointly the two become fully human . . . ." A Grief Observed (New York, 1961), pp. 40-41. See also The Four Loves, pp. 147-148.

[55]Letters, pp. 277-278.

[56]Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer (New York, 1964), p. 15.

57"Four-letter Words," The Critical Quarterly, III (Summer, 1961), 122. This objection was also voiced earlier in "Prudery and Philology," The Spectator, CXCIV (January 21, 1955), 63-64.

58"The Necessity of Chivalry," Time and Tide, XXI (August 17, 1940), 841.

V. THE GOLDEN WORLD OF ROMANCE

Those who know C. S. Lewis only as the urbane rationalist of Miracles and Mere Christianity will perhaps be surprised by the subject of this chapter. But for the wider reader of Lewis, those who know Dymer and Till We Have Faces as well, that Lewis was an advocate and practitioner of romance will come as no shock. He defended the romantic imagination in literature of all ages and often described in his own poetry the quality of this experience, sometimes an experience of another world:

> Why should I leave this green-floored cell,
> Roofed with blue air, in which we dwell,
> Unless, outside its guarded gates,
> Long, long desired, the Unearthly waits,
> Strangeness that moves us more than fear,
> Beauty that stabs with tingling spear,
> Or Wonder, laying on one's heart
> That finger-tip at which we start
> As if some thought too swift and shy
> For reason's grasp had just gone by?[1]

In his search for the Unearthly, for Strangeness, Beauty, and Wonder, Lewis returned to medieval literature. It was an effort to discover for the modern reader the meaning of romance that led Lewis to consider its qualities, to join in the modern revival of interest in the literature of quest, the Arthurian romance, and finally to defend the medieval institution of knighthood which exemplified the questing spirit. In this chapter I shall trace the path of Lewis' interest in romance, the medieval

Arthurian romance, and chivalry in an attempt to show the importance of his contribution here as in other fields of medieval studies.

It was perhaps because Lewis was so convinced of the necessity of restoring a deeper romantic vision to a world dominated by shallow materialism that he never hesitated to declare open war on the Jailer as he called him who

> . . . has dominated our minds for 30 years or so, and specially in the field of literature and literary criticism. He is a sham realist. He accused all myth and fantasy and romance of wishful thinking: the way to silence him is to be more realistic than he--to lay our ears closer to the murmur of life as it actually flows through us at every moment and to discover there all that quivering and wonder and (in a sense) infinity which the literature that he called realistic omits. For the story which gives us the experience most like the experience of living is not necessarily the story whose events are most like those in a biography or a newspaper.[2]

A cursory glance at Lewis' reading preferences will reveal that for him the stories closest "to the murmur of life" are those with an imaginative appeal, often with a setting in another world either in Faerie or in outer space. Lewis chose those tales which reinvested the world with strangeness and beauty, in other words those with an imaginative depth.

But he was not concerned with semantic discussions about the meaning of "romance" and "romantic." The definitions given in the Oxford English Dictionary fit his

usage quite well. For him, then, a "romance" was "a tale in verse embodying the adventures of some hero of chivalry, especially of those of the great cycle of medieval legend, and belonging both in matter and form to the ages of knighthood; also, in later use, a prose tale of a similar character," and "romantic" meant "characterized or marked by, invested or environed with romance or imaginative appeal." The latter definition implies a wider application than the first, since this quality is not restricted to its medieval literary embodiment. Lewis accordingly explored the place of romantic experience in the extra-literary life of man, especially as it affected his religious presence.

Before I begin a discussion of the literature of romance, it might be well to point out the links between this subject and the previous analyses. In his discussions of the romantic vision in literature, Lewis emphasized the depth of reality such a vision provides and the imaginative freedom with which it is created. Similarly, the medieval model, which Lewis so carefully explicated for his readers, was his effort to reinvest at least that segment of the medieval ethos with the imaginative depth that characterized his own response. Furthermore, even in the carefully organized and hierarchically structured medieval model there was room for <u>longaevi</u>, the longlivers as he called them, who

". . . are marginal, fugitive creatures. They are perhaps the only creatures to whom the Model does not assign, as it were, official status. Herein lies their imaginative value. They soften the classic severity of the huge design. They intrude a welcome hint of wildness and uncertainty into a universe that is in danger of being a little too self-explanatory, too luminous."[3] These non-human creatures provide the imaginative truancy for a rationally ordered universe.

Strangely enough, Lewis also considered the development of an imaginative freedom in poetic creation to be one of the by-products of the highly structured allegorical method. Medieval allegory, which came into being at the time of the dual action of the death of paganism and the birth of introspection, allowed a freedom of elaboration in the treatment of the gods. Lewis described this process when he wrote that the

> . . . gods must be, as it were, disinfected of belief; the last taint of the sacrifice, and of the urgent practical interest, the selfish prayer, must be washed away from them, before that other divinity can come to light in the imagination. For poetry to spread its wings fully, there must be, besides the believed religion, a marvellous that knows itself as myth. For this to come about, the old marvellous, which once was taken as fact, must be stored up somewhere, not wholly dead, but in a winter sleep, waiting its time. If it is not so stored up, if it is allowed to perish, then the imagination is impoverished. Such a sleeping place was provided for the gods by allegory. Allegory may seem, at first, to have killed them; but it killed only as the sower kills, for gods, like other creatures must die to live.[4]

Thus the subjects of allegory were no longer bound by the dogmas of a believed religion but could now become the object of imaginative creation.

Just as the fairy world of longlivers and the imaginative freedom of allegory provided a welcome contrast to the cosmic and the literary worlds if they threatened to become too rationally ordered, so too the ethos of the courtly love tradition was described by Lewis as a truancy although only a temporary one from the strictures of medieval religion. "When Frauendienst succeeds in fusing with religion, as in Dante, unity is restored to the mind, and love can be treated with a solemnity that is whole-hearted. But where it is not so fused, it can never, under the shadow of its tremendous rival, be more than a temporary truancy. It may be solemn, but its solemnity is only for the moment. It may be touching but it never forgets that there are sorrows and dangers before which those of love must be ready when the moment comes, to give way."[5] In each of these instances, Lewis emphasized the common imaginative freedom existing within the seemingly monolithic medieval world.

But there is, perhaps, a more profound similarity of emphasis among the topics which Lewis considered in relation to medieval literature. He voiced this emphasis in many ways and in many places; but in every case his

attempt was to reinvest literature with an imaginative depth and lead his readers to an appreciation of that depth, to inspire his readers with an understanding of ". . . one of the functions of art: to present what the narrow and desperately practical perspectives of real life exclude."[6] Lewis noted also that part of the contemporary interest in psycho-analysis might be motivated by a similar desire, since ". . . psycho-analysis heals some of the wounds made by materialism. For the general effect of materialism is to give you, where you expected an indefinite depth of reality, a flat wall only a few inches away. Psycho-analysis offers you some kind of depth back again--lots of things hidden behind the wall. Hence those who have once tasted it feel that they are being robbed of something if we try to take it from them."[7] Whether he was considering the Arthurian romances, the poetry of Yeats, or the Tolkinian trilogy, Lewis always gave praise to the romantic imagination which ". . . takes all the things we know and restores to them the rich significance which has been hidden by 'the veil of familiarity'."[8] It was his interest in the quality and literary examples of this imaginative depth that motivated Lewis' discussion of romance and romantic literature as it had inspired his criticism of other topics in the medieval tradition.

Here, as in the case with my previous subjects,

Lewis' interest found academic expression, for often during his career as a public lecturer at Oxford University, he spoke on the writers or periods whom we traditionally link with the influence of romance. The first series of lectures he delivered in 1927 was on the topic "Eighteenth Century Romantics"; later he spoke on sixteenth-century literature and on "Tasso and English Literature."[9]

In spite of his interest in the medieval romance, Lewis recognized its subordinate position in relation to other medieval genres. When he explained the reason for the modern interest in romance, perhaps he was also pointing out the course of his own interest. He maintained that

> . . . it was the Ballad and the Romance that first excited modern interest in the Middle Ages; medieval studies began then. The reason is simple. These forms appealed to the Romanticism of the 18th and 19th centuries. Even now many of us were first lured to Medieval studies by this romantic attraction . . . . But the paradox is that the note is one which the real Middle Ages struck only in a minority of Ballads and Romances and hardly at all in any other form. That boundlessness, indefiniteness, suggestiveness are not the common or characteristic medieval mood. The real temper of those ages was not romantic. The Arthurian stories represent, perhaps, a truancy or escape from habitual concerns.[10]

Whatever the course of Lewis' own developing interest in medieval literature, the literature of romance occupied a large part of his critical attention.

Taking a hint from Lewis' explanation, it might

be well if I explain his various remarks on Romanticism in general. One of his earliest books, published first in 1933, was titled The Pilgrim's Regress: An Allegorical Apology for Christianity, Reason, and Romanticism. In the preface for the second edition of 1943, Lewis carefully explained the meaning of Romanticism in his title. "What I meant was a particular recurrent experience which dominated my childhood and adolescence. . . . The experience is one of intense longing. It is distinguished from other longings by two things. In the first place, though the sense of want is acute and even painful, yet the mere wanting is felt to be somehow a delight. . . . In the second place, there is a particular mystery about the object of this Desire. Inexperienced people (and inattention leaves some inexperienced all their lives) suppose, when they feel it, that they know what they are desiring."[11] But in reality, this desire has its fulfillment only in the Christian sphere. Prescinding from the religious implications, for the present, I would like to explore in more detail the nature of this desire, since it is essential to Lewis' definition of Romanticism. To borrow a phrase which he uses later in the same book, the dialectic of Desire is one of the qualities of the romantic impulse in man.[12] In his autobiography, Lewis illustrates further this quality of the romantic imagination which was so

important to him. He relates an experience of childhood which made him an incurable romantic:

> Once in those very early days my brother brought into the nursery the lid of a biscuit tin which he had covered with moss and garnished with twigs and flowers so as to make it a toy garden or a toy forest. That was the first beauty I knew. . . . I do not think the impression was very important at the moment, but it soon became important in memory. As long as I live my imagination of Paradise will retain something of my brother's toy garden. And every day there were what we called "The Green Hills"; that is, the low line of the Castlereagh Hills which we saw from the nursery windows. They were not very far off but they were, to children, quite unattainable. They taught me longing--Sehnsucht; . . . ."[13]

The inspiration of this longing, sehnsucht, is the first essential characteristic of the romantic quality in literature. The romantic imagination of the creator must be forever on a quest for the fulfillment of its longing in the unexplored realms of earth, spirit, space, or Faerie.[14]

The numinous became for Lewis a description of the worlds into which the romantic imagination wanders; it is, therefore, another element in his description of the literature of romance. In the most unlikely places we find Lewis explaining the meaning of the term. Writing in The Problem of Pain, he invites us to ". . . suppose that you were told simply 'There is a mighty spirit in the room', and believed it. Your feelings would be then even less like the fear of danger, but the disturbance would be profound. You would feel wonder and a certain shrinking--a sense of inadequacy to cope with such a

visitant and of prostration before it--an emotion which might be expressed in Shakespeare's words 'Under it my genius is rebuked.' This feeling may be described as awe, and the object which excites it as the Numinous."[15] The imagination of the romance writer is one which captures and transmits this feeling of awe and unexplained shrinking; it is the imagination which transmits in the Grail legend a sense of unexplained mystery. As Lewis describes it, the

> . . . romancers create a world where everything may, and most things do, have a deeper meaning and a longer history than the errant knight would have expected; a world of endless forest, quest, hint, prophecy. Almost every male stranger wears armour; not only that there may be jousts but because visors hide faces. Any lady may prove a fay or devil; every castle conceals a holy or unholy mystery. The hero is a sort of intruder or trespasser; always, unawares, stumbling on to forbidden ground. Hermits and voices explain just enough to let us know how completely he is out of his depth, but not enough to dissipate the whole mystery. The hard, gay colours make this world very unlike that of Kafka, but it has some of the same qualities. You might call it inverted (or converted) Kafka; a Kafka who enjoys the labyrinth.[16]

In the labyrinth of romance the hero is fated to pursue the quest as a dialectic of unattainable desire in a setting invested with an air of mystery. Further, the writer of romance in any age shows his readers a mysterious depth of reality which can never actually be encompassed but in which the reader follows the hero's pursuit of his quest. Lewis has here developed a theme

common to all his studies in medieval literature, the exploration of the imaginative depth and freedom which the romantic writer bestows on his subject.

In one of his more humorous moments, he described the modern situation as an opposite one in which the ". . . very play of mind, I think, is birth-controlled today."[17] Modern realism is thus the Jailer who seeks to hold men's minds in chains, but Lewis was not a critic to be chained.

Besides his descriptions of sehnsucht and the numinous as elements of romance, there is another quality which is mentioned frequently in this context, that is, imaginative freedom. Dabney Hart asserts that "Lewis's emphasis on imaginative freedom as the essence of literature and his identification of this freedom with the medieval spirit is the unifying theme of English Literature of the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama."[18] But Lewis' emphasis on imaginative freedom occurs also in his early history of allegory. There he wrote that when allegory came into prominence something else was let in too; allegorical

> . . . decoration may let romance in. The poet is free to invent, beyond the limits of the possible, regions of strangeness and beauty for their own sake. Under the pretext of allegory something else has slipped in, and something so important that the garden in the Romance of the Rose itself is only one of its temporary embodiments--something which, under many names, lurks at the back of most romantic poetry. I mean the 'other world' not of

> religion, but of imagination; the land of longing, the Earthly Paradise, the garden east of the sun and west of the moon. Just as the gods--and their homes--are fading into mere decoration, in the mythological poets of this age, we catch a glimpse of the new life and the new dwellings that poetry will find for them.[19]

By dispensing with the demands of a believed religion, the writer of allegory is free to create regions for his actions which have no limitations imposed by realism.

I have spoken before of Lewis' praise of Gavin Douglas as a writer of allegory, but he also praises Douglas for his poem, The Palice of Honour, which

". . . illustrates the furthest point yet reached in the liberation of fantasy from its allegorical justification. . . . /For/ he writes with a clear head and a learned and practised pen; but what he describes is sheer wonderland, a phantasmagoria of dazzling lights and eldritch glooms, whose real raison d'etre is not their allegorical meaning, but their immediate appeal to the imagination."[20]

For the medieval creator of romance, the world of the unexplored geographical regions of the earth, of the spirit, or of Faerie were the settings in which imaginative freedom could operate. Lewis is lavish in his praise of any writer such as Douglas who creates and explores these regions.

Two of the modern genres of romance, science fiction and children's fairy stories, continue the same tradition of imaginative freedom usual in medieval romance.

Although the location of the hero's quest is sometimes different in the modern versions, the results are familiar. In one of Lewis' last books, Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories, the emphasis throughout is on these "other worlds" of Faerie and outer space and the way these settings are linked to the more familiar "other world" of man, that of the spirit.[21] The fairy story presents its reader (of any age) with a ". . . longing for he knows not what. It stirs and troubles him (to his life-long enrichment) with the dim sense of something beyond his reach and, far from dulling or emptying the actual world, gives it a new dimension of depth. He does not despise real woods because he has read of enchanted woods: the reading makes all real woods a little enchanted."[22] The writer of fairy stories has great freedom to command and create in this unexplored region. Driven by the expanding outer limits of geographical knowledge, the modern writer of science fiction can no longer write romances of far-away terrestrial places, but must instead explore the "other world" of the whole universe. In this sense contemporary science fiction ". . . represents simply an imaginative impulse as old as the human race working under the special conditions of our own time. It is not difficult to see why those who wish to visit strange regions in search of such beauty, awe, or terror as the actual world does not supply have

increasingly been driven to other planets or other stars. It is the result of increasing geographical knowledge. The less known the real world is, the more plausibly your marvels can be located near at hand. As the area of knowledge spreads, you need to go further afield: . . . ."[23] In both fairy stories and science fiction, as in medieval allegory, the writer goes beyond the limits of the known world in order to have the freedom of his fantasy in another world.

Finally, medieval romance as a separate genre or as it existed as a quality in allegory, was not, in Lewis' opinion, opposed to realism. In the first place, as I have suggested earlier, romance is a depth of realism not always drawn upon by mankind. The writer of romance invests the everyday world with a holiday freedom and almost a religious awe. But, more profoundly, often romance is accomplished by a realistic mode. When the writer is using realism of presentation, he is ". . . bringing something close to us, making it palpable and vivid, by sharply observed or sharply imagined details. We may cite as examples the dragon 'sniffing along the stone' in Beowulf; Laȝamon's Arthur, who, on hearing that he was king, sat very quiet and 'one time he was so red and one time he was pale'; the pinnacles in Gawain that looked as if they were 'pared out of paper'; . . . ."[24] All of these are examples of realism in presentation. Lewis

distinguishes clearly between such realism and realism of content. The former was a special prerogative of the medieval romance which exhibited a ". . . brilliant and exuberant development of presentational realism, because men were at that time inhibited neither by a sense of period--they dressed every story in the manners of their own day--nor by a sense of decorum."[25] Realism of content, on the other hand, presents what is ". . . probable or 'true to life'."[26] Although medieval stories often lack realism of content, realistic presentation of the wonderful or the marvelous makes the unusual events more unusual because their unique nature is taken so matter-of-factly.

When Lewis first began his discussion of the romantic experience with a description of sehnsucht, he placed the object of this desire in the religious sphere. Although he subsequently considered this romantic longing in secular literature, it seems only just for me to relate briefly Lewis' religious explanation in this regard. Romantic longings were for him considered as the dialectic by which man reached his goal of meeting God as an adult Christian. But in this journey, as Lewis warned, ". . . the dangers of romantic Sehnsucht are very great. Eroticism and even occultism lie in wait for it. On this subject I can only give my own experience for what it is worth. When we are first converted I suppose we think

mostly of our recent sins; but as we go on, more and more of the terrible past comes under review. In this process I have not (or not yet) reached a point at which I can honestly repent of my early experiences of romantic Sehnsucht. . . . Without them my conversion would have been more difficult."[27] The hero of Lewis' first allegory, John in The Pilgrim's Regress, follows narratively the dangerous course hinted at above, to arrive finally at union with God who is the final object of all sehnsucht. Man's search for the object of his desire will ultimately lead him home. But as yet he knows ". . . the sense that in this universe we are treated as strangers, the longing to be acknowledged, to meet with some response, to bridge some chasm that yawns between us and reality, is part of our inconsolable secret. And surely, from this point of view, the promise of glory, in the sense described [the approval of God] becomes highly relevant to our deep desire. For glory means good report with God, acceptance by God, response, acknowledgement, and welcome into the heart of things. The door on which we have been knocking all our lives will open at last."[28] Because the Christian religion is for Lewis the terminus ad quem of romantic longing, he has been called a romantic theologian, a title he himself applied to Charles Williams. "A romantic theologian," in Lewis' description, "does not mean one who is romantic about theology but one who is theological

about romance, one who considers the theological implications of those experiences which are called romantic."[29]

Not only does Lewis consider the Christian object of romantic longing, but he also defines another important characteristic of romance, the numinous, in a theological context. The numinous is one of several aspects which comprise all religious experience; ". . . numinous awe is as old as humanity itself."[30] But before it becomes more than simply a mysterious dread of the unknown, it must be linked with a moral sense. These two stages, numinous awe and a moral sense can exist separately but the ". . . third stage in religious development arises when men identify them--when the Numinous Power of which they feel awe is made the guardian of the morality to which they feel obligation."[31] But, the numinous exists, as does sehnsucht, outside the realm of the Christian experience and does indeed contribute to the creation of a romantic narrative in every age.[32]

The restoration of a romantic vision was for Lewis a life-long concern. His earliest critical writing, The Allegory of Love, betrays such an interest and in his later poetry he describes his personal reaction in old age. As an old man he writes:

> Still beauty calls as once in the mazes of
> Boyhood. The bird-like soul quivers. Into her
> Flash darts of unfulfilled desire and
> Pierce in a bright unabated anguish.

> Armed thus with anguish, joy met us even in
> Youth--who forgets? This side of the terminus
> Then, now, and always, thus, and only
> Thus, were the doors of delight all open.[33]

In his own life, Lewis exhibits the continuity of the romantic impulse which he attributes to the whole human race and its history.

As I have already suggested, Lewis considered that romance and the exercise of the romantic imagination exist in human nature in every age. More specifically, he asserted that ". . . the elements of epic and romance, like those of economic and social history, exist at all times in the real world; and historians, even in dealing with contemporary events, will pick out those elements which the habitual bent of their imagination has conditioned them to notice."[34] Although these romantic qualities exist at all times in the real world, in some eras they find freer expression in literature than at other times. Lewis' championing of the spirit and literature of the romance was motivated by his desire to reinvigorate the force of imaginative freedom in our times.

From the romances available to the scholar and critic of medieval literature, Lewis chose to devote his attention to the Arthurian cycle. His critical writings cover the gamut of Arthurian literature from La3amon to Spenser, whom Lewis considered to be essentially medieval in his use of the matter and techniques of romance. In these works Lewis traced the presence of the romantic

imagination and its literary results as well as discussing some techniques and approaches which are applicable to the literature of romance. Although Lewis' critical writings on the Arthuriad are less well known than the topics of my previous chapters, he has made an important contribution to Arthurian studies and received the acclaim of an outstanding scholar for his sensitive criticism. Eugène Vinaver has praised his discernment in Arthurian studies on several occasions. Writing in the "Introduction" to his edition of The Works of Sir Thomas Malory, Vinaver praised a short essay which Lewis had written proposing a three-storeyed arrangement of Mark-Launcelot-Galahad in a bad-good-best relationship.[35] Vinaver's admiration emerges also in an exchange of essays in which he writes to Lewis that ". . . our task as interpreters is really much more modest than people think. We can neither define nor explain. But we can point in the direction where we feel the path of genius lies and hope that in this way we may bring ourselves and others a little closer to its understanding. That is what you have done. Hence my gratitude."[36] Lewis' approach to medieval romance was consonant with his entire critical intention, that is, he was interested in investing (or reinvesting) the literary work with its original depth of meaning using the means available to him as a perceptive reader and a literary historian, not as a theologian

or as an anthropologist.[37] With this purpose uppermost in his mind, he writes lovingly and enthusiastically about the matter of Britain.

The general characteristics of the world of romance according to Lewis, longing or sehnsucht, an awe in the presence of the numinous, and imaginative freedom of creation, serve as guides in his discussions of the Arthurian romances. In a fleeting reference to Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Lewis writes that the ". . . final Bercilak who solemnly pronounces Gawain 'the fautlest freke' is not merely the madcap Bercilak whom we have seen in his own castle, still less the ogreish Bercilak of Arthur's hall. He rises higher, grows more numinous."[38]

Again, in a comment on the romantic epic of Arthur which Milton at one time considered writing, Lewis stresses the imaginative freedom with which Milton approached his subject. Milton intended ". . . to paint Arthur etiam sub terris bella moventem (Mansus 81), Arthur's wars 'beneath the earth'. I do not know whether this means strange adventures experienced by Arthur in some other world between his disappearance in the barge and his predicted return to help the Britons at their need, or adventures in Fairyland before he became king, or some even wilder Welsh tale about the caldron of Hades."[39] These comments are an introduction to Lewis'

more specific considerations of the tales of Arthur from Laȝamon to Spenser. Although Lewis writes of the spirit of medieval romance and of individual Arthurian romances, I found it difficult to discover a description of the medieval romance in general. However, when Lewis praised a romance by the Elizabethan author Thomas Lodge, he did so in terms which might be borrowed to fit the earlier chivalric tales. The romance, Lewis writes, ". . . is not realistic, it is real; the compulsive imagination of a larger, brighter, bitterer, more dangerous world than ours. It is hard romance with gorgeous backgrounds provided for scenes of lavish bloodshed: . . ."[40] It is in this bright world of medieval romance that the knights of Arthur will set out on their quests.

In the opinion of Lewis' secretary, Walter Hooper, Laȝamon's Brut was a subject which was becoming very important to Lewis.[41] Shortly before his death in 1963, he wrote an introduction to a selected edition from the Brut and one of his last pieces was "The Genesis of a Medieval Book," in which he demonstrates the Old English tradition in which Laȝamon writes.[42] Technically, the Brut, even in its Arthurian sections, belongs to the realm of the epic rather than the romance. Lewis admits that, as contrasted with Wace's earlier version, the Brut ". . . sees all its battles in terms of the heroic past."[43] But in important additions, the Brut foreshadows the later

romances of Arthur; the introduction or elaboration of the supernatural is one of the evidences of a romantic imagination at work. Lewis remarks that Arthur ". . . after his last battle [in Wace's account] was carried to Avalon for the healing of his wounds and that the Britons still look for his return thence. The Brut likes the passage so well that it reproduces it twice (23067 seq., 28610-41), making us much surer than Wace had done that Avalon is a fairy country, since Arthur is taken thither by Argante 'the queen', 'the fairest of all elves'."[44] By the elaboration of the character of Merlin, La3amon has given the impetus to his later importance in the medieval romances and even in Lewis' own novel, That Hideous Strength. Lewis cites the descriptions of Merlin from the Brut as an example of the imaginative creation of a character who somehow has retained his connection with another world. Lastly, as a proof of the creative imagination of La3amon, Lewis uses the unusual similes in the Arthurian section of the Brut, those similes which ". . . embody a quality of eye and imagination which I believe we never meet in Langland, Chaucer, or Gower."[45] With this initial and somewhat tentative approach to the Arthurian romances, Lewis turned his full attention to a more important English work in this genre, Malory's Le Morte Darthur.

From his youth, Lewis had been fascinated by the

Arthurian legends; but his preference was for the literary form which Malory gave them, not the crass commercialism which had engulfed them in some parts of England. During a school holiday in 1921, Lewis visited the legendary sites of the Arthurian stories. His description of the Cornwall journey demonstrates the horrors of Tourism when applied to the world of romance. He writes to his brother:

> We lay this night at Tintagel, storied name. There is a generally-diffused belief that this place is connected with King Arthur; so far as I know from Malory, Layamon, and Geoffrey of Monmouth, it is not so; it is really the seat of King Mark and the Tristram story. This has not deterred some wretch . . . from erecting an enormous hotel on the edge of the cliff, built in toy Gothic, and calling itself the King Arthur Hotel. The interior walls are made with cement with lines stamped on them to represent stone. They are profusely illustrated with toy armour from Birmingham; a Highland target, suitable for Macbeth, jostles a reproduction of late Tudor steel plate and is lucky to escape a Cromwellian helmet for its next door neighbour. In the centre of the lounge, with the Sketch and Tatler lying on it is--of course--<u>the</u> Round Table. Ye Gods!! Even the names of the knights are written on it. Then there are antique chairs--on which very naturally we find the monogram K.A. stamped.[46]

More to his liking was the "storied" world of <u>Le Morte Darthur</u>; here Lewis was to find a rich field for his creative enthusiasm about medieval literature.

When he approached the <u>Morte</u>, he did so armed with an appreciation of its qualities as a romance, that is, as a narrative portraying the dialectic of desire,

the response to the numinous, and a realistic mode of presentation. Although medieval romance need not always be romantic, for Lewis this quality defined its universal greatness. Besides the casual remarks which Lewis sometimes included in his letters, he wrote several articles devoted exclusively to the Morte. A letter written in 1955 succinctly indicates the major emphasis of Lewis' criticism. He admits that "What Malory meant I have no idea. I doubt if he had any clear intention. To use an image I have used before, I think his work is like one of our old English cathedrals to which many generations have contributed in many different styles, so that the total effect was foreseen by no one and must be regarded as something midway between a work of art and a work of nature. I therefore give up asking what M. meant; we can only ask what his book in fact means. And to me it means primarily neither the Grail story nor the Lancelot story but precisely the tension and interlocking between the two."47 Lewis' final emphasis here on the relation between the two great quests in the Morte, for human love and for a vision of the Grail, suggests that the hero Launcelot is in a position similar to that of John in Lewis' allegory, Pilgrim's Regress. Both have a quest to find the object of their desire, their sehnsucht. Launcelot, like John, finds the highest earthly joy empty, pale beside the memory of what might have been. As Lewis

describes this emotional reaction, ". . . Launcelot at the very summit of earthly (and hardly earthly) glory 'wept as he had bene a chylde that had bene betyn'. Why, unless he remembered a higher glory and 'pined his loss'? Finally, when all is ended and Launcelot comes to take his last leave of Guinevere, Malory again harks back to the Grail; 'God deffende but that I shulde forsake the worlde as ye have done. For in the queste of the Sankgreall I had that tyme forsakyn the vanytees of the world, had not youre love been'."[48] Launcelot's story becomes a dialectic between the desire for human love and the desire for religious vision.

Before continuing with my discussion of the next medieval Arthurian romance, it is necessary to take a brief excursion to another related genre to which Lewis devoted much of his enthusiastic attention. One of Lewis' delights as a critic is to reintroduce the modern reader to an author or work which has fallen into disrepute. In these cases he writes with such abundant admiration that we wonder how the work has escaped our notice before this time. Lewis' praise of the romantic epics of Boiardo, Ariosto, and Tasso is of this kind. These writers are the proper guides to the golden world of Spenser's Faerie Queene.[49] Lewis' remarks about these Italian writers emphasize their dual importance as a vital and abundant heritage in themselves and as

an immediate influence on Spenser's composition.

Literature, which was Lewis' chief delight, must be an ever-broadening horizon. To exclude any part of this heritage is to deprive oneself of an opportunity of delight. Hence Lewis' question is how this

> . . . vast body of poetry [the Italian epics] has in our time fallen strangely out of favour. . . . Our oblivion of these poets is much to be regretted, not only because it vitiates our understanding of the Romantic Movement--a phenomenon which becomes baffling indeed if we choose to neglect the noble viaduct on which the love of chivalry and 'fine fabling' travelled straight across from the Middle Ages to the nineteenth century--but also because it robs us of a whole species of pleasures and narrows our very conception of literature. It is as if a man left out Homer, or Elizabethan drama, or the novel. For like these, the romantic epic of Italy is one of the great trophies of the European genius: a genuine kind, not to be replaced by any other, and illustrated by an extremely copious and brilliant production. It is one of the <u>successes</u>, the undisputed achievements.[50]

Lewis then proceeds to demonstrate with enthusiastic praise the pleasures of these romantic epics, pleasures which reside chiefly in the fertility of their imaginative creations. Praising Ariosto particularly for this quality, Lewis decides that his poem, <u>Orlando Furioso</u>, ". . . is 'God's plenty'; you can no more exhaust it than you can exhaust nature itself. When you are tired of Ariosto, you must be tired of the world. If ever you come near to feeling that you can read no more adventures, at that very moment he begins another with something so ludicrous, so piquant, or so questionable, in its exordium,

that you decide to read at least this one more. And then you are lost; you must go on till bedtime, and next morning you must begin again."[51] In this passage, Lewis adopts a casual approach to criticism which aims not so much at scholarly investigation as at the universal love for a good story. On this basis alone, Ariosto must be reintroduced to all lovers of literature.

However, for my purpose these romantic epics are more important because of their contribution to Spenser's achievement in The Faerie Queene. More than Malory with whom Spenser shared at least the world of Arthurian romances, these writers, Boiardo, Ariosto, and Tasso, contributed a sense of the luxury of romance, the richness of character and incident, to Spenser's poem.[52] The narrative surface is the chief point of comparison between the two groups; we will discover differences if we go below the ". . . interlocked stories of chivalrous adventure in a world of marvels."[53] In the Italian poem of Ariosto, the narrative world is in the realm of the marvelous, but just behind that is the real daily world of the Mediterranean and last of all comes the legendary world of Roland and Charlemagne. Spenser's world, however, is never localized for The Faerie Queene simply begins in a world of vision.[54] It is here in Faerie that the surface narrative luxuriates with characters and actions; it is in this locality that the influence of the Italian romantic epics can be felt.

Spenser's Faerie Queene, perhaps more than any romance considered to be chronologically medieval, deserves the description of the title of this chapter, the golden world of romance. Lewis' Spenserian studies, although still in an uncollected state, betray an unswerving love of The Faerie Queene as the quintessence of romantic vision.[55] Nevill Coghill, a friend of Lewis from Oxford days, described an early memory which hints at Lewis' future love of Spenser. Once when it was his turn to read the traditional weekly paper, Lewis

> . . . chose for his subject The Faerie Queene . . .; repudiating the Hazlitt view that if you leave the allegory alone it will not bite you, he gave an account of the Spenserian world that championed its ethical attitudes as well as their fairy-tale terms, with a rich joy in the defeat of dragons, giants, sorcerers, and sorceresses by the forces of virtue; it was a world he could inhabit and believe in as one inhabits and believes a dream of one's own; its knights, dwarfs, and ladies were real to him, and became real even to me while he discussed them: he rejoiced as much in the ugliness of the giants and in the beauty of the ladies as in their spiritual significances, but most of all in the ambience of the faerie forest and plain that, he said, were carpeted with a grass greener than the common stuff of ordinary glades; this was the reality of grass, only to be apprehended in poetry: the world of the imagination was nearer to the truth than the world of senses, ..."[56]

Here Coghill presents us with the outline of a critical approach which Lewis maintained throughout his career; his joyful appreciation of the variety of Faerie is somehow communicated to his hearers or readers who are led to approach Spenser with humility before the variety

of wonders there. "The poem is a great palace, but the door into it is so low that you must stoop to go in. No prig can be a Spenserian. It is of course much more than a fairy-tale, but unless we can enjoy it as a fairy-tale first of all, we shall not really care for it."[57] An understanding and appreciation of the fairy world of Spenserian romance becomes, for Lewis, the gateway to a new vision of reality.

Here, as is the case in his remarks on other Arthurian romances, Lewis points to the presence of longings, desires, or quests as one defining characteristic of the genre. In fact, the place of composition of the poem was a singularly fortunate circumstance, for Spenser

". . . may, as a poet, have needed the very country. There is a real affinity between his Faerie Queene, a poem of quests and wanderings and inextinguishable desires, and Ireland itself--the soft, wet air, the loneliness, the muffled shapes of the hills, the heart-rending sunsets. It was of course a different Ireland from ours, an Ireland without potatoes, white-washed cottages, or bottled snout: but it must already have been 'the land of longing'."[58]

The Irish land of longing became the fairy world of Arthur and Gloriana and in this world of the imagination Spenser sets his knights out on their innumerable quests. Just as one journey nears its completion, another begins to present a pattern of continuity and action. The world of romance

is one in which the longing for completion cannot be fulfilled and the quests ended. Lewis advances the conjecture that the sense of longing in The Faerie Queene had its origins in Spenser's Christian longings for the other world, but he is on surer ground when he relates these desires for reconciliation to Spenser's political exile.[59]

Everywhere in the writings of Lewis about The Faerie Queene there is a sense of joyful enthusiasm about the invention of the world of romance. This emphasis, promised in the description of Coghill, was amply fulfilled in Lewis' criticism. Lewis writing on Spenser as a romancer is Lewis at his best, his most humane, most sensitive, and most enthusiastic. He transmits a joy in reading Spenser which sends his readers scurrying back to their own copies of the poem.

The imaginative world of romance as it exists in Spenser's poem has depth and richness because of a power that gives us a new vision of reality. For as Lewis asserts,

> Because the (improbable) adventure which we are following is liable at any moment to be interrupted by some quite different (improbable) adventure, there steals upon us unawares the conviction that adventures of this sort are going on all round us, that in this vast forest (we are nearly always in a forest) this is the sort of thing that goes on all the time, ... We lose the feeling that the stories we are shown were arbitrarily made up by the poet. On the contrary, we are sure there are plenty more which he has not time to show us. We are being given mere selections, specimens: instances of the normal life of that wooded, faerie world.

> The result of this is an astonishing sense of reality.[60]

The world of romance suddenly becomes a vision of reality that is truer than realism.

Finally, Lewis' assessment of The Faerie Queene is developed from a vision of the world of romance portrayed with all the exuberance, variety, and sheen which enables him to describe the matter as well as the style as predominantly golden.[61] Since he is a lover of the golden vision in literature, Lewis presented it to his readers as a heritage of a former culture. Lewis maintains that Spenser's ". . . world ended and his fame may end with it. To attempt an agreed estimate across the chasms that have now opened would be futile. There may--or may not--come a time when the culture for which Spenser wrote and the culture which is now replacing it can be compared, by men to whom English is a dead language, as coolly as we compare two periods of ancient Egyptian history. At present it is not possible. We can only say that those who in any degree belong to the old culture still find in the ordered exuberance of the Faerie Queene an invigorating refreshment which no other book can supply."[62] Since Lewis was fond of presenting himself as "an Old Western man," we can be sure that he is one who delights in the "ordered exuberance" of Spenser's poem and the world it creates.

Consequent upon Lewis' attention to medieval

romance are three critical approaches which he described as the theory of shared authorship, the anthropological approach, and polyphonic narrative. He developed these critical approaches in many writings and at many chronological points in his career. Each may be considered as one of his contributions to the appreciation of medieval romance.

When writing of the relationship between an author and his book, Lewis denied that there was such a one-to-one unit in most medieval literature. Especially in developing the matters of romance, authors were concerned with touching up an old story rather than creating an entirely new one. While great freedom exists to elaborate the world given by the matter of the romance, still the fact remains that the matter remains. Yet, my description implies that medieval authors were unsatisfied with this situation or felt limited. Clearly the case is otherwise, for they rejoiced and boasted in the number of auctours they could call upon. In describing the "Genesis of a Medieval Book," Lewis writes that

> The characteristic activity of the medieval--perhaps especially the Middle English--author is precisely 'touching up' something that was already there. And this something may itself be the 'touching up' of something earlier: as we see in the sequence Geoffrey-Wace-Laȝamon. . . . Hence we might equally well call our medieval authors the most unoriginal or the most original of men. They are so unoriginal that they hardly ever attempt to write anything unless someone has written it before. They are so rebelliously and insistently original that

> they can hardly reproduce a page of any older work without transforming it by their own intensely visual and emotional imagination, turning the abstract into the concrete, quickening the static into turbulent movement, flooding whatever was colourless with scarlet and gold.[63]

Lewis' application of this theory is specifically to the author-book relationship of Laȝamon and the Brut and Malory and Le Morte Darthur. In both these incidents Lewis demands that we abandon modern questions about this relationship. He writes, "If criticism cannot do without the clear separation of one work from another and the clear unity of the individual author with the individual text, then criticism of medieval literature is impossible."[64] Lewis tried to maintain a critical position apart from biographical considerations and to focus his attention on the contribution of each author to the total structure. For example, the place of Malory in the development of the Arthurian legend is one which Lewis frequently compared to one stage in the prolonged building of a medieval cathedral in which the result is greater than the contribution of any one builder or literary period.

Because Lewis was a critic of literature first and foremost, he eschewed anything which led away from instead of toward the literary works themselves. The anthropological approach to medieval romance is one of the chief offenders in this regard, for the search for the ritual origins of the Grail or Bercilak leads the reader away from the known literature back into the unknown religious past.

In spite of his obvious lack of sympathy for this position, Lewis presents a very interesting analysis of its popularity. The world of the medieval romance has a sense of mystery and awe which is revealed to the reader as he follows the hero-knight on his questing journey. Until the present age, Lewis suggests that this sense had been the usual or stock response of readers. "But a generation has grown up which really needs the corrective that Mr. Speirs is offering. For whatever reason--a materialistic philosophy, anti-romanticism, distrust of one's unconscious--gigantic inhibitions have, with astonishing rapidity, been built up. The response which was once easy and indeed irresistible now needs to be liberated by some sort of mental ascesis. In working out an (anthropological) ascesis which will do this Mr. Speirs is performing a useful work. He is 'digging again the wells that the Philistines have filled'. If the choice, for his generation, lies between reading the romances as frivolous or arbitrary fancy and reading them with constant reference to The Golden Bough, let them by all means take the second alternative."[65] A modern reader may therefore find a new way to reinvest the world of romance with its primal mystery:

> And he does this by building up round himself a second romance which he mistakes for reality. This second romance is a distorted version of the first one. It is also a quest story, but it is he, not Perceval or Gawain, that is on the quest. The forests are not those of Broceliande but those of anthropological theory. It is he himself who quivers at the surmise

> that everything he meets may be more important, and other, than it seemed. It is to him that such hermits as Frazer and Miss Weston, dwelling in the heart of the forest, explain the *significacio* of the ferlies. Prompted by them, he does not, like Perceval, omit to ask the all-important question.
>
> And he has his reward. He gets in the end an experience qualitatively not unlike the experience the romancers meant to give. He rejects the fiction as it was actually written. He can respond to it only indirectly, only when it is mirrored in a second fiction, which he mistakes for a reality.[66]

Although Lewis concedes that the result may be similar for both the traditional and the modern reader of romance, that response being awe in the face of unknown mystery, he suggests that a method which travels through the forests of anthropological theory is a personal or culture necessity, not a method of literary criticism.

Lewis' third critical approach to romance, his description of polyphonic narrative, is an amplification upon the suggestion of Eugène Vinaver, who applies it to the French prose romances which were Malory's sources.[67] Using Spenser's *Faerie Queene* as an example, Lewis describes the method as one which is ". . . constantly shifting from one story and one set of characters to another, but with a 'dovetail' or liaison at the point where we change."[68] The interwoven narrative resulting is uniquely suited to the matter and appeal of medieval romance, for it presents a story with a complexity that evokes a sense of reality even in the midst of its romantic setting in Faerie.[69] Polyphonic narrative is the

stylistic analogue to the romantic complication of the matter of romance.

Although Lewis considers this method mainly in relation to Malory and Spenser, he maintains that these two authors are only a sample from a long tradition of use. This older narrative tradition may appear disjointed to modern readers but we must recall the fact that modern ". . . taste in fiction has not yet lasted as long as the taste for the interwoven sort lasted. When we find ourselves rejecting a method in which so many spirited and polished generations took pleasure, it requires great boldness--or impudence--to assume that we are in the right."[70] The older tradition must, at the very least, be given a sympathetic hearing. A reader who has entered into Lewis' wonder and enthusiasm about the romance lands of Malory and Spenser will acknowledge that the technique of polyphonic narrative enhances rather than hinders the creation of these "other worlds."

One of Lewis' close friends and former students, Dom Bede Griffith, has written a description of his tutor which might well serve as an introduction to my next topic, Lewis' defense of chivalry as a value learned in medieval romances and chronicles. Bede Griffith, in speaking of Lewis' primary concern, writes that no matter what

> . . . judgment the future may pass on his work as a literary historian, as an imaginative writer,

> as a moralist or as an apologist for Christianity, he stood in his generation (which is also our generation, for those of us who grew up with him) as one of the great defenders of what one may call the cultural tradition of Europe, and was himself a monument of this culture. I myself have certainly never known anyone who represented it so broadly and so deeply. When talking to him you felt that you were in touch with all that was best in the tradition of the past, not as something dead but as something perennially alive. Whether he was expounding it as a literary historian, or developing it as an imaginative writer (in what he himself would have regarded as a very humble way) or defending it as an apologist (in which also he rated his own contribution as something very modest), he always stood for this great tradition. Yet one must not give the impression that he was always looking backwards. On the contrary, for him the discovery of the past has been the discovery of a living reality which was always leading one to something beyond, ...[71]

The emphasis which Griffith points out, that of Lewis as a discoverer of the best of the cultural tradition of Europe with the intention of making that part of the tradition live again, is especially applicable to his writings on the practice and nature of chivalry as an ideal of medieval romance. Lewis' writings on chivalry, although they are not as numerous as those on other medieval subjects, are impassioned enough to indicate his real concern with this topic. His examples are drawn chiefly from the Arthurian romances, but his intent is to make the literary ideal a modern concern. If this aim seems somewhat impractical at first, I can only say that Lewis' defense is an attempt to show not only the practicality of chivalry but the absolute necessity of

it in the modern world.

First, and most importantly, Lewis recognized that chivalry even in its medieval practice always remained the ideal towards which men stretched their actions. In a very early letter, written when Lewis was still a student at Oxford, he relates an argument about chivalry which began when he and a fellow student were talking ". . . of Troilus and this led us to the question of Chivalry. I thought the mere ideal, however unrealized, had been a great advance. He thought the whole thing had been pretty worthless."[72] There were some whom Lewis never convinced that chivalry was an ideal to be esteemed, but he continued in his efforts.

From Malory's word portrait of Launcelot, Lewis drew the material for his own description of chivalry. The important accomplishment of the knight, in Lewis' opinion, is that he combines in his person two contradictory tendencies of mankind. "The knight is a man of blood and iron, a man familiar with the sight of smashed faces and the ragged stumps of lopped-off limbs; he is also a demure, almost a maidenlike, guest in hall, a gentle, modest, unobtrusive man. He is not a compromise or happy mean between ferocity and meekness; he is fierce to the nth and meek to the nth. When Launcelot heard himself pronounced the best knight in the world, 'he wept as he had been a child that had been beaten'."[73] The

medieval knight was not chivalrous by nature, instead he was the product of a learned tradition. Lewis asserted that the medieval ideal, as it was exemplified in the literature of romance, was, like many other parts of the ethos, an evidence of the civilized culture of those times.

The hero of Malory's romance was for Lewis the best example of this civilizing influence of chivalry. Even though Launcelot ultimately failed to attain the ideal, his struggle has left a pattern for human action. In his person, Launcelot taught mankind the nature of the ideal which ". . . brought together two things which have no natural tendency to gravitate towards one another. It brought them together for that very reason. It taught humility and forbearance to the great warrior because everyone knew by experience how much he usually needed that lesson. It demanded valour of the urbane and modest man because everyone knew that he was as likely as not to be a milksop."[74] Lewis' emphasis on the institution of knighthood as an art to be learned is the result of his admiration of the Middle Ages as a period of tradition and civilization.

Although Lewis presented himself to the world often as a Christian apologist, he did not allow his Christianity to impinge on his evaluation of chivalry. That is, he recognized that chivalry belongs more to the

realm of the civilization of medieval Christendom rather than specifically to Christianity. The institution of chivalry ". . . is rather the civilization of the heart (by no means of the head), a fineness and sensitivity, a voluntary rejection of all the uglier and more vulgar impulses. We can describe such as courtesy, gentleness, chivalry. It makes the Morte a 'noble' as well as a 'joyous' history."[75] In another comment on the same book, Lewis writes more explicitly that the outstanding

> . . . ethical tone of Malory's book is certainly not the bourgeois, still less the proletarian, morality of our own day. And, on its own showing, it is not the Christian rule of life; all the chief characters end as penitents. It is aristocratic. It does not forbid homicide provided it is done in clean battle. It does not demand chastity, though it highly honours life-long fidelity to the chosen mistress. Though it admires mercy it allows private war and the vendetta. And it has not respect at all for property or for laws as such. It is distinguished from heroic morality by its insistence on humility. It can be very accurately called nobility if the noble is defined as the opposite of the vulgar. It does not condemn all whom we could now call 'criminal'; its displeasure is primarily for the cad. It is magnificently summed up in Sir Ector's final lament, which so far as we know, is Malory's own invention: 'Thou was the mekest man and the jentyllest that ever ete in halle emonge ladyes and thou were the sternest knight to thy mortal foe that ever put spere in the rest.' There is the real, and indispensable, contribution of chivalry to ethics.[76]

This combination of valour and meekness which is knighthood was a high achievement and a valuable part of the medieval heritage shown to us in the literature of romance. Although in its literary representation it remained an

ideal which never found perfect embodiment, it becomes for our time still an ideal to be sought.[77]

In a time when threats of global war and stories of battle atrocities are everyday news, it may seem unrealistic to call, as Lewis did, for a return to the ideal of medieval chivalry. Yet this is precisely his plea. Writing just at the beginning of the Second World War and from his personal experience in the First World War, Lewis reaffirms "The Necessity of Chivalry," as his article is titled. He states his position with characteristic clarity. Chivalry and its model Launcelot present an ideal from the Middle Ages which is ". . . the one hope of the world. It may or may not be possible to produce by the thousand men who combine the two sides of Launcelot's character. But if it is not possible, then all talk of any lasting happiness or dignity in human society is pure moonshine."[78] The alternative is a barbaric society in which the valour of Launcelot becomes brutality and his meekness, cowardness. This is the natural condition, whereas medieval society sought to achieve an artistic creation which combined these two extremes into their most ideal form. Lewis ends his plea with an explanation of the present urgency of the problem. We must recognize that chivalry is an art to be learned, ". . . --something that needs to be achieved, not something that can be relied upon to happen. And this

knowledge is specially necessary as we grow more democratic. In previous centuries the vestiges of chivalry were kept alive by a specialized class, from whom they spread to other classes partly by imitation and partly by coercion. Now, it seems the people must either be chivalrous on its own resources, or else choose between the two remaining alternatives of brutality and softness."[79] In this democratic society, the tradition of chivalry as art will restore to modern civilization some of the humane values which Lewis admired in the Middle Ages.

Against the charge that the ideal of chivalry is mere escapism from the problems of the real world, Lewis defended himself by meeting his opponents on their own terms. "The ideal embodied in Launcelot is 'escapism' in a sense never dreamed of by those who use that word; it offers the only possible escape from a world divided between wolves who do not understand, and sheep who cannot defend, the things which make life desirable. There was, to be sure, a rumour in the last century that the wolves would gradually become extinct by some natural process; but this seems to have been an exaggeration."[80] More seriously, Lewis explained his use of knightly violence in the Narnia stories for children, using the same emphasis of necessary escapism. To answer those critics who say we must keep all such tales of the world as a

place of death, violence, wounds, and adventures away from the minds of children, Lewis retorts, "Since it is so likely that they will meet cruel enemies, let them at least have heard of brave knights and heroic courage."[81] To paraphrase T. S. Eliot, chivalry makes the modern world possible for civilized men. The freedom, gentilesse, and mesure of the medieval knight must be the characteristics of his modern descendent in the western cultural tradition.

In another article written also during the Second World War, Lewis clarifies his views about the nature of medieval civilization, but in so doing he reasserts the necessity of seeking such chivalric ideals as personal honour and justice. He admits, "Our ancestors were cruel, lecherous, greedy and stupid, like ourselves. But while they cared for other things more than for civilization--and they cared at different times for all sorts of things, for the will of God, for glory, for personal honour, for doctrinal purity, for justice--was civilization often in serious danger of disappearing?"[82] The title of the article, "First and Second Things," indicates Lewis' opinion about the modern preoccupation with preserving civilization. Perhaps personal achievement of honour and justice, modeled on the heroes of medieval romance is a better "first thing" to be sought than the ambiguous entity civilization.

Sir John Bourchier, Lord Berners, translated for

the English speaking world the chronicle history of knighthood which Froissart compiled. Berners, in Lewis' opinion, saved the modern world from too great a break with the medieval past. He transplanted to English soil the real world of French chivalry. The French original had been devoted to the theme of chivalry ". . . --the life of the romances reproduced as nearly as possible in the real world--chivalry in all its hardness, all its softness, and all its fantasticality."[83] Froissart and then Lord Berners demonstrated that, although war had its crimes of plunder and rape, it also was the occasion of youthful heroism, for the ". . . Kynge was as than but in the floure of his youth desyring nothyng so moche as to have dedes of armes."[84] It is this youthful presentation of the reality of chivalry which draws praise from the modern defender of chivalry. These chroniclers of chivalric deeds saved us from disaster. "They made these things ours just in time. To have snatched these ripe fruits of the Middle Ages when the Middle Ages were already over may even have carried a certain advantage with it. They were fresh in men's minds at a moment when new forms and new modes of sentiment might otherwise have swept us off our feet; their popularity may have helped to save us from a too complete break with the past. . . . This slowness to abandon, or readiness to reinstate, the old traditions of courtesy and honour may partly explain

the speed and success with which the new aristocracy 'gentled their condition'."[85] If we recognize in this praise Lewis' characteristic denigration of the importance of the Renaissance, we may still agree that the real world of Froissart and hence of Lord Berners is valuable for preserving the continuity of chivalry as an ideal and a practical rule of life. As a loving reader of medieval romances and chronicles of knighthood, Lewis saw the necessity of preserving the art of chivalry for the modern world and attempted to draw sympathetic readers to his opinion.

In the tradition of medieval scholars, Lewis belongs with those whose appreciation of the literature of romance is infused with a grasp of the vitality and depth of this genre. He is concerned more with intensifying the modern reader's response than with minute searches for sources and influences. This attention to persons gives his reader the sense of a warmly human and genuinely appreciative critic on the other side of the pen.

Notes to Chapter V

[1]"Expostulation," Poems, p. 58.

[2]"Notes on the Way: Hedonics," Time and Tide, XXVI (June 16, 1945), 495.

[3]The Discarded Image, p. 122.

[4]Allegory of Love, p. 83. On the dual process of the death of paganism and the birth of introspection which made allegory possible, see above, Chapter III, pp. 50-52.

[5]Allegory of Love, pp. 42-43.

[6]"On Stories," Essays Presented to Charles Williams, p. 96.

[7]"Psycho-analysis and Literary Criticism," They Asked for a Paper, p. 136.

[8]"The Dethronement of Power," Time and Tide, XXXVI (October 22, 1955), 1374.

[9]Oxford University Gazette, LVII (April 29, 1927), 53; LVIII (October 14, 1927), 52; LXIII (July 2, 1943), 567; LXXVI (June 28, 1946), 684; LXXIX (June 24, 1949), 1066.

[10]"Imagination and Thought in the Middle Ages," Medieval and Renaissance Literature, pp. 43-44.

[11]The Pilgrim's Regress, pp. 7-8. For another view of Lewis' idea of romanticism, see John Lawlor, "Rasselas, Romanticism, and the Nature of Happiness," Friendship's Garland: Essays presented to Mario Praz (Rome, 1966), pp. 258-270.

[12]Corbin S. Carnell's unpublished dissertation, "The Dialectic of Desire: C. S. Lewis' Interpretation of Sehnsucht," studies the meaning of desire as it occurs in all of Lewis' work and relates it to the other common expression of Romanticism; (University of Florida, 1960).

[13]Surprised by Joy, p. 7.

[14]Throughout this chapter, Faerie will be used to designate the realm of the elf or fairy; this meaning is one I am borrowing from J. R. R. Tolkien's essay, "On Fairy Stories," Essays Presented to Charles Williams, p. 42.

[15]*The Problem of Pain* (New York, 1944), p. 5. Lewis also described the Numinous in "Is Theism Important? A Reply," *Socratic Digest*, V (1952), 49-50.

[16]"The Anthropological Approach," *English and Medieval Studies presented to J. R. R. Tolkien*, eds. Norman Davis and C. L. Wrenn (London, 1962), p. 228.

[17]"To Roy Campbell," *Poems*, p. 66.

[18]"C. S. Lewis's Defense of Poesie," unpub. diss. (University of Wisconsin, 1959), pp. 104-105.

[19]*Allegory of Love*, pp. 75-76. Later, in the same book, Lewis repeats this assertion that ". . . allegory liberates the mind for free excursions into the merely imaginable: a 'world of fine fabling' becomes accessible and we are in sight of *The Faerie Queene*; . . . ." p. 260.

[20]*Allegory of Love*, p. 290.

[21]"On Stories," *Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories* (London, 1966), p. 12. This essay is reprinted here from the collection *Essays Presented to Charles Williams*.

[22]"On Three Ways of Writing for Children," *Of Other Worlds*, pp. 29-30.

[23]"On Science Fiction," *Of Other Worlds*, pp. 67-68. In *The Discarded Image*, p. 144, Lewis describes Mandeville as a medieval writer of romantic geography, presumably because of his free invention beyond the limits of geographic knowledge.

[24]*An Experiment in Criticism*, pp. 57-58.

[25]*An Experiment in Criticism*, p. 58.

[26]*An Experiment in Criticism*, p. 59.

[27]"Christianity and Culture," *Christian Reflections*, pp. 22-23. Helmut Kuhn has written of the dangers of limitless romantic longings as they appear to Lewis in "C. S. Lewis: Der Romancier der unerbittlichen Liebe," *Wort und Wahrheit* (January 10, 1955), p. 117.

[28]"The Weight of Glory," *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses* (New York, 1949), p. 11.

[29]"Preface," Essays Presented to Charles Williams, p. vi. Robert Reilly has explored further the implication of the title in his unpublished dissertation, "Romantic Religion in the Works of Owen Barfield, C. S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and J. R. R. Tolkien" (Michigan State University, 1960).

[30]The Problem of Pain, p. 7.

[31]The Problem of Pain, p. 10.

[32]See Eugène Vinaver's "Introduction," The Works of Sir Thomas Malory (Oxford, 1947), I, lxxv-lxxviii, for an explanation of Malory's secularization of the theology of the Grail legend.

[33]"From One Oldster to Another," Poems, p. 42.

[34]The Discarded Image, p. 182.

[35]The Works of Sir Thomas Malory, I, lxxvi. The article by Lewis referred to is a book review in Medium Aevum, III (1934), 237-242.

[36]"On Art and Nature: A letter to C. S. Lewis," Bennett, Essays on Malory, p. 40. Earlier in the same essay Vinaver stated about Lewis, "Alone among critics you have perceived the significance of Malory's treatment of the supernatural and the religious, ..." (p. 34).

[37]Letters, pp. 295-296.

[38]"Arthuriana," a review of Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages: a collaborative study, ed. R. S. Loomis, in The Cambridge Review, LXXXI (February 13, 1960), 355.

[39]A Preface to "Paradise Lost," p. 7.

[40]English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, p. 425. I am indebted for this suggestion to Dabney Hart whose dissertation, "C. S. Lewis's Defense of Poesie," discusses his general critical theory.

[41]Medieval and Renaissance Literature, p. viii.

[42]"The Genesis of a Medieval Book," Medieval and Renaissance Literature, p. 25.

[43]"The Genesis of a Medieval Book," p. 30.

[44]"The Genesis of a Medieval Book," p. 30.

[45]"The Genesis of a Medieval Book," p. 33. In another essay, "Imagination and Thought in the Middle Ages," Medieval and Renaissance Literature, pp. 41-42, Lewis used the Brut to demonstrate the "bookish" nature of medieval culture. It is interesting to note that Eugène Vinaver makes a similar claim for the origin of medieval romance. See "From Epic to Romance," Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, XLVI (1964), 479.

[46]Letters, pp. 69-70.

[47]Letters, p. 264.

[48]"The Morte Darthur," Medieval and Renaissance Literature, p. 109.

[49]"The Morte Darthur," pp. 108-109. W. P. Ker made the suggestion that the Italian epics are important influences on Spenser's Faerie Queene. Lewis is here elaborating on this suggestion. See Ker's essay, "Romance," Collected Essays of W. P. Ker, ed. Charles Whibley (London, 1925), II, 322.

[50]Allegory of Love, p. 298.

[51]Allegory of Love, p. 302. In "Tasso," Medieval and Renaissance Literature, p. 114, Lewis makes an interesting remark about the romantic Italian epics when he suggests that their continuance in popularity served as an impetus to the revival of medieval studies in the eighteenth century and, until the modern decline allowed ". . . a continuous possibility of escape into such regions from the 'prison of good sense', ..."

[52]Lewis cites the influence of the Italian epic on Spenser in several places: in his earliest criticism, Allegory of Love, pp. 298-310; in a letter, "Spenser's Irish Experience and The Faerie Queene," RES, VII (January, 1931), 83; and in an essay, "Tasso," Medieval and Renaissance Literature, pp. 111-120.

[53]Allegory of Love, p. 308.

[54]Allegory of Love, p. 310.

[55]My evaluation of Lewis' contribution to Spenserian studies is necessarily incomplete since his Cambridge lectures on Spenser have not yet been published, but are being prepared for publication. See Medieval and Renaissance Literature, p. ix, n. 1.

[56]"The Approach to English," Gibb, Light on C. S. Lewis, pp. 51-52.

[57]"Edmund Spenser, 1522-99," Medieval and Renaissance Literature, p. 133.

[58]"Edmund Spenser, 1522-99," p. 126.

[59]English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, p. 357. See also pp. 382-383, where Lewis maintains that the quest of Spenser's Arthur can be understood in the light of the Platonic quest for the Divine through images of earthly glory (Gloriana). "Arthur is an embodiment of what Professor Nygren calls 'Eros religion', the thirst of the soul for the Perfection beyond the created universe."

[60]"Edmund Spenser, 1522-99," Medieval and Renaissance Literature, p. 135.

[61]English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, pp. 389-391.

[62]English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, p. 393.

[63]Medieval and Renaissance Literature, pp. 37-38. See also, "The English Prose Morte," Bennett, Essays on Malory, p. 22.

[64]"The Genesis of a Medieval Book," Medieval and Renaissance Literature, p. 22.

[65]"De Audiendis Poetis," Medieval and Renaissance Literature, p. 13.

[66]"The Anthropological Approach," Davis and Wrenn, English and Medieval Studies, p. 229. See also "Arthuriana," Lewis' review of Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages: a collaborative study in The Cambridge Review, LXXXI (February 13, 1960), 355, 357. In "The Anthropological Approach," p. 227, Lewis suggests that the study of Jungian archetypes in the collective unconscious may serve the same end of reinvesting reality with a sense of mystery, and the search for archetypes then becomes a romance.

[67]"Introduction," The Works of Sir Thomas Malory, p. xlix ff.

[68]"Edmund Spenser, 1552-99," Medieval and Renaissance Literature, p. 133.

[69]English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, p. 380.

[70]English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, p. 332.

[71]"Light on C. S. Lewis," The Month, n.s. XXXV, no. 6 (June, 1966), 341.

[72]Letters, pp. 81-82.

[73]"Notes on the Way: The Necessity of Chivalry," Time and Tide, XXI (August 17, 1940), 841.

[74]"The Necessity of Chivalry," p. 841.

[75]"The English Prose Morte," Bennett, Essays on Malory, p. 9.

[76]"The Morte Darthur," Medieval and Renaissance Literature, pp. 104-105.

[77]Lewis' review of the modern Arthurian poems of Charles Williams emphasized that although the medieval institution of chivalry was a failure, it was an elaborate attempt to prepare a perfect human society. For this reason it deserves our respect. See The Oxford Magazine, LXIII (March 14, 1946), 249.

[78]"The Necessity of Chivalry," Time and Tide, XXI (August 17, 1940), 841.

[79]"The Necessity of Chivalry," p. 841.

[80]"The Necessity of Chivalry," p. 841.

[81]"On Three Ways of Writing for Children," Of Other Worlds, p. 31.

[82]"Notes on the Way: First and Second Things," Time and Tide, XXIII (June 27, 1942), 520. In another article, "The Conditions for a Just War," Theology, XXXVIII (May, 1939), 374, Lewis wrote, "Christianity has made two efforts to deal with the evil of war--chivalry and pacifism. Neither succeeded. But I doubt whether chivalry has such an unbroken record of failure as pacifism." In view of his previous separation between chivalry and Christianity, perhaps "Christendom" would be a better word than "Christianity."

[83]English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, p.154.

[84]English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, p.155.

[85]English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, p.156.

VI. A NOTE ON MEDIEVAL THEMES AND GENRES IN LEWIS' CREATIVE WRITING

In the critical writings devoted to the medieval world and its literature, C. S. Lewis approached his subject with a largeness of vision and a living appreciation. At many points Lewis' critical writings merge with his novels and poetry and belong to the humanistic tradition of creative criticism. In the work of a writer so devoted to the Middle Ages as Lewis was, his love of the period fired his imagination and guided his construction. Thus, in his children's stories and science fiction novels, as well as in his poetry, Lewis returned to the world of the Middle Ages he described so well in his critical works. It is from this point of view, against the background of the themes and genres of medieval literature which I have discussed previously, that I shall approach the stories and poems of C. S. Lewis. Here again, Lewis attempted to re-create for the modern reader the best of the medieval world.

Lewis' science fiction trilogy, Out of the Silent Planet, Perelandra, and That Hideous Strength, has been analyzed extensively in an attempt to discover and describe his use of Arthurian legends and other medieval influences.[1] Most recently, the Silent Planet trilogy has been linked with the fiction of J. R. R. Tolkien and Charles Williams in a demonstration that all three are

illustrations of the medieval idea of the "city of God."[2] These books by Lewis develop two world pictures in their presentation of the Christian story of redemption, the order of space in the world of Deep Heaven and the lost order of earth in the Arthurian world. Both worlds as developed by Lewis share with his "medieval model" the characteristics of hierarchical order and a plenitude of vitality. Since it seems, however, that these two worlds have already been thoroughly described in relation to the "medieval model," a more productive inquiry can be followed by turning our attention to the other world which Lewis created, the world of Narnia. In the seven children's stories, which are known collectively as the Chronicles of Narnia, Lewis drew extensively upon the medieval ethos which he described in his literary criticism. In contrast with the myth of Deep Heaven and with the Arthurian legends which he used in his science fiction novels, in the Chronicles of Narnia Lewis was not contributing to an already existing body of stories but was here creating another world in which his imagination alone imposed the boundaries on his creation.

When Lewis wrote this series of children's fairy tales, he considered that it was not a special form for the taste of children only. Rather, he maintained that the

> . . . whole association of fairy tale and fantasy with childhood is local and accidental. I hope

> everyone has read Tolkien's essay on "Fairy Tales," which is perhaps the most important contribution to the subject that anyone has yet made. If so, you will know already that, in most places and times, the fairy tale has not been specially made for, not exclusively enjoyed by, children. It has gravitated to the nursery when it became unfashionable in literary circles, just as unfashionable furniture gravitated to the nursery in Victorian houses. In fact, many children do not like this kind of book, just as many adults do not like horsehair sofas; and many adults do like it, just as many adults like rocking chairs. And those who do like it, whether young or old, probably like it for the same reason.[3]

Thus when Lewis created the Narnian world he was able to invest it with both seriousness and charm because he considered the fairy tale to be a worthy object for his creative talents.

In the world of Narnia, as in the "medieval model," both hierarchical order and a plenitude of vitality are defining characteristics. The English children who are lucky enough to gain entrance in Narnia find there a world in which everyone has a place, a dignity, and a responsibility. In the tradition of the children's story, often the creatures of Narnia are talking mice or flying horses, but each has a place in the total plan of creation. The White Witch, the usurping king, or an enemy attacker are the forces of disorder which propel the narrative forward. But in each of the seven tales, the hierarchical order is reestablished at the end with a duly constituted king or his representative sitting on the throne.

Besides this order which spans individual adventures in the temporal history of Narnia, there is also a more profound sense in which the order of this world is important. In contrast to human history, which had a beginning before history and will have an end (in Lewis' view) beyond the power of man to know of it, the history of Narnia is told from the ordering of its creation to the disordering or rather re-ordering of its final day. Lewis relates in these tales the complete chronicle of Narnia. In The Magician's Nephew, we are allowed to watch again the founding of Narnia. The Lion, Aslan, who is the creator of this world, calls it into being by his song. After the process of animal creation has been completed the animal kingdom of Narnia assembles to receive a final summons to life:

> The Lion, whose eyes never blinked, stared at the animals as hard as if he was going to burn them up with his mere stare. And gradually a change came over them. The smaller ones--the rabbits, moles and such-like--grew a good deal larger. The very big ones--you noticed it most with the elephants--grew a little smaller. Many animals sat up on their hind legs. Most put their heads on one side as if they were trying very hard to understand. The Lion opened his mouth, but no sound came from it; he was breathing out, a long, warm breath; it seemed to sway all the beasts as the wind sways a line of trees. Far overhead from beyond the veil of blue sky which hid them the stars sang again: a pure, cold, difficult music. Then there came a swift flash like fire (but it burnt nobody) either from the sky or from the Lion itself, and every drop of blood tingled in the children's bodies, and the deepest, wildest voice they had ever heard was saying:
>
> 'Narnia, Narnia, Narnia, awake. Love. Think.

> Speak. Be walking trees. Be talking beasts. Be divine waters.'[4]

In this scene, the creation of Narnia has reaffirmed the medieval power of the music of the spheres and the order of song as a creative power.

At the other end of the chronicle, The Last Battle tells of the destruction of the Narnian kingdom, often using echoes of the heroic tradition to suggest the splendor of the loss. As the founding of Narnia had been described by reference to the medieval belief in the ordering power of music, so here the disorder of the world is heightened by the unmusical nature of the sounds of creation. Now there was a

> . . . wide-spread noise [which] broke the silence: first a murmur, then a rumble, then a roar. And now they could see what it was that was coming, and how fast it came. It was a foaming wall of water. The sea was rising. In that treeless world you could see it very well. You could see all the rivers getting wider and the lakes getting larger, and separate lakes joining into one, and valleys turning into new lakes, and hills turning into islands, and then those islands vanishing. And the high moors to their left and the higher mountains to their right crumbled and slipped down with a roar and a splash into the mounting water; . . . .
>
> Then Aslan said, 'Now make an end.'
>
> The giant threw his horn into the sea. Then he stretched out one arm--very black it looked, and thousands of miles long--across the sky till his hand reached the Sun. He took the Sun and squeezed it in his hand as you would squeeze an orange. And instantly there was total darkness.[5]

The whole history of Narnia has been directed by the Lion-creator, Aslan, towards this end in which the order of this world is replaced by another which is but the

fulfillment of an everlasting desire. The Narnian world, like the medieval, is but an imitation "outside the walls" of the high pomps of heaven. As one of the characters explains, the end of the Narnia we know is not the end of the real Narnia. "That had a beginning and an end. It was only a shadow or a copy of the real Narnia which has always been here and always will be here: just as our own world, England and all, is only a shadow or copy of something in Aslan's real world. You need not mourn over Narnia, Lucy. All of the old Narnia that mattered, all the dear creatures, have been drawn into the real Narnia through the Door. And of course it is different; as different as a real thing is from a shadow or a waking life is from a dream."[6] The medieval concept of the universe being "outside the walls," as Alanus ab Insulis described it, has been here transplanted to Narnia.

Furthermore, the Chronicles of Narnia depict a universe filled with life and light. In the earliest history of that world, all nature joins in the dance of life. One of the stories, The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader," tells the adventures of the Prince of Narnia and his friends on an Odyssey-like voyage to the end of the world. On one of their stops, the adventurers meet a retired star, who has all the stern features and the dignity one would expect in a personification of "star-ness." The Narnian world is replete with talking mice,

flying horses, heroic beavers, and courtly centaurs. The woods too are full of living creatures as Lucy discovers when she hears

> . . . a noise in the glade, a noise such as trees make in a high wind, though there was no wind tonight. Yet, it was not exactly an ordinary tree-noise either. Lucy felt there was a tune in it, but she could not catch the tune any more than she had been able to catch the words when the trees had so nearly talked to her the night before. But there was, at least, a lilt; she felt her own feet wanting to dance as she got nearer. And now there was no doubt that the trees were really moving--moving in and out through one another as if in a complicated country dance.[7]

The living universe of Narnia is nearer the "medieval model" in its vital order than it is to the modern universe with its mysterious and dark space distances.

Of the medieval literary genres, the allegorical mode of presentation is not one which Lewis uses consistently in the Narnian Chronicles. Rather, his use is partial in that individual adventures may have an allegorical meaning but no single tale can be consistently explained simply on an allegorical level. Lewis described his creation of the Lion, Aslan, in this way when he wrote, "If Aslan represented the immaterial Death in the same way in which Giant Despair /in <u>Pilgrim's Progress</u>/ represents Despair, he would be an allegorical figure. In reality however he is an invention giving an imaginary answer to the question, "What might Christ become like, if there really were a world like Narnia and He chose to be

incarnate and die and rise again in that world as He actually has done in ours?' This is not allegory at all."[8] Although Lewis denies that the total action of Aslan in the chronicles represents allegorically the Christian redemption, Aslan's death and resurrection recall distinctly the Christian story. After being put to death by the Witch, Aslan describes his resurrection when he says, "'It means,' said Aslan, 'that though the Witch knew the Deep Magic, there is a magic deeper still which she did not know. Her knowledge goes back only to the dawn of time. But if she could have looked a little further back, into the stillness and the darkness before Time dawned, she would have read there a different incantation. She would have known that when a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in a traitor's stead, the Table would crack and Death itself would start working backwards.'"[9] Here as in other adventures of Aslan, the events in Narnia mirror a higher reality according to Lewis. The relation described here of a lower created event mirroring a higher reality is what Lewis has defined in his critical writings as allegory.

In The Allegory of Love, Lewis described the medieval bestiary as ". . . the chief monument of the symbolical idea, in the Middle Ages, ..."[10] Although the actions of the Narnian tales often belong to the allegorical mode, individual figures in these actions are borrowed

directly from the medieval bestiary. As king of the beasts and of the kingdom, Aslan reigns with power and dignity. Since medieval times, the lion has been used as a symbol of regal power and of Christ; Lewis builds on both these correspondences.[11] He surrounds the appearances of Aslan with awe and reverence and even, at times, with ceremonial fun. Lewis describes Aslan's first appearance in the proper setting for a regal creature; the children are looking out over the country of Narnia and in the middle of the field ahead of them

> . . . was the Stone Table. It was a great grim slab of grey stone supported on four upright stones. It looked very old; and it was cut all over with strange lines and figures that might be the letters of an unknown language. They gave you a curious feeling when you looked at them. The next thing they saw was a pavillion pitched on one side of the open place. A wonderful pavillion it was--and especially now when the light of the setting sun fell upon it--with sides of what looked like yellow silk and cords of crimson and tent-pegs of ivory, and high above it on a pole a banner which bore a red rampant lion fluttering in the breeze which was blowing in their faces from the far-off sea. When they were looking at this they heard a sound of music on their right; and turning in that direction they saw what they had come to see.
>
> Aslan stood in the centre of a crowd of creatures who had grouped themselves round him in the shape of a half-moon.[12]

Thus, from his first appearance, Aslan partakes of the regal nature of his ancestors in the bestiaries. His individual actions often link him with those of Christ, for both are the Saviors of their people.

From Lewis' discussion of romance and the medieval

romance in particular, we learn that he chose to emphasize the imaginative depth which the romantic imagination contributed to the narrative art. In the Chronicles of Narnia, this imaginative depth is everywhere evident, in the incidents of the narrative and in the atmosphere in which these actions are placed. Besides these evidences of a romantic imagination at work, Lewis employs the more usual devices of the medieval romance: the series of questions, the hermit guide, and the impossible task made easy by supernatural aid.

In The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader," the voyagers encounter strange wonders in their search for the lost councilors of the royal court. They find an enchanted dragon-boy, a pool with the Midas touch, a land whose inhabitants are only voices, but finally come to the very end of the world. Lewis' description is not exotic; as a matter of fact, the very end of the world turns out to be just what we would have expected. It draws its power from this sense that it is imaginatively familiar; the description inspires an awe because it seems inevitable. At the very end of the world, the sailors see beyond them a

> . . . wall and it turned into wonderful rainbow colours. Then they knew that the wall was really a long, tall wave--a wave endlessly fixed in one place as you may often see at the edge of a waterfall. . . . You might have supposed they would have thought of their danger. They didn't. For now they saw something not only behind the wave but behind the sun. They could not have seen

> even the sun if their eyes had not been strengthened by the water of the Last Sea. But now they could look at the rising sun and see it clearly and see things beyond it. What they saw--eastward, beyond the sun--was a range of mountains. It was so high that either they never saw the top of it or they forgot it. . . . And suddenly there came a breeze from the east, tossing the top of the wave into foamy shapes and ruffling the smooth water all round them. It lasted only a second or so but what it brought them in that second none of those three children will ever forget. It brought both a smell and a sound, a musical sound. . . .
>
> No one in that boat doubted that they were seeing beyond the end of the world into Aslan's country.[13]

At that moment, the world into which the children look becomes the object of desire, a longed-for possession which will be a reminder of that world beyond the end of the world. This vision will provide the children with a moment of sehnsucht.

Throughout the tales of Narnia, Aslan is the object of numinous awe in the romantic tradition described by Lewis. The appearance of the Lion is often foreshadowed or disguised, but when he comes we always know that he is directing the movements of men and animals in Narnia by his strange power. In The Silver Chair, Aslan describes the task which leads to the children's quest, but he ends his command with a warning:

> Here on the mountain I have spoken to you clearly: I will not often do so down in Narnia. Here on the mountain, the air is clear and your mind is clear; as you drop down into Narnia, the air will thicken. Take great care that it does not confuse your mind. And the signs which you have learned here will not look at all as you expect them to look, when you meet them there. That is why it is so important to know them by heart and pay no

> attention to appearances. Remember the signs and believe the signs. Nothing else matters. And now, daughter of Eve, farewell--'.[14]

In the tradition of the medieval romance, the child does not remember the signs, but pays attention to appearances. Thus, the quest gains complications. Yet, at the same time, the adventures remain linked in the memory of the reader with the numinous power of the Lion, Aslan.

Lewis' earliest published writing was a volume of poetry, Spirits in Bondage: A Cycle of Lyrics, published in 1919 under the name of Clive Hamilton.[15] As he himself often admitted, his greatest ambition was to be a poet rather than a critic. Another volume of poetry appeared in 1926; this time it contained a single narrative poem, Dymer.[16] After his death, his secretary edited numerous other poems, some of which had been previously published in British periodicals.[17] These three volumes constitute Lewis' published poetic canon. The narrative poem, Dymer, does not align itself with either medieval themes or poetic forms. Rather, its theme and technique suggest an oriental approach. Scattered throughout the other two volumes, however, are evidences of Lewis' medieval interests.

In the early volume, Spirits in Bondage, Lewis uses the medieval French ballade form, even to the traditional envoi.[18] Here, too, is the medieval de contemptu mundi theme:

Roland is dead, Cuchulain's crest is low,
The battered war-gear wastes and turns to rust,
And Helen's eyes and Iseult's lips are dust
And dust the shoulders and the breasts of snow.

The faerie people from our woods are gone,
No Dryads have I found in all our trees.
No Triton blows his horn about our seas
And Arthur sleeps far hence in Avalon.[19]

The poems in this first volume are grouped in three sections: "The Prison House," "Hesitation," and "The Escape." The lyrics thus arranged reveal a youthful sensitivity, crushed by the knowledge of universal pain, tempered by beauty, and finally emerging with a faith in the power of the spirit of man to find beauty somewhere, in this world or another. The longing for the fulfillment of desire, the dialectic of desire, which Lewis presents autobiographically in Surprised by Joy, narratively in the Chronicles of Narnia, and which he considered to be an element of romance in his critical writings, is here developed throughout the cycle of lyrics. The final resolution is one which he would subsequently reaffirm many times, with various modifications. Here Lewis affirms that the end of desire or sehnsucht will come only in the imaginative land of dreams:

O Country of Dreams!
Beyond the tide of the ocean, hidden and sunk away,
Out of the sound of battles, near to the end of day,
Full of dim woods and streams.[20]

This poem was written before Lewis' conversion to Christianity; the end of longing becomes the possession of beauty. Later, Lewis would change the goal to Beauty, but,

nevertheless, he always affirmed that the steps between desire and fulfillment, however dangerous or labyrinthian, were necessary in the search for Beauty.

The medieval influences in Lewis' later poetry are revealed both in theme and genre. In one poem, "The Planets," he explores the medieval doctrine of the distinctive power of the planets, using as a structural measure the variations of alliterative meter. He arranges the planets according to their positions in the Ptolemaic universe. Of Mars he writes

> A haughty god
> Mars mercenary makes there his camp
> And flies his flag; flaunts laughingly,
> The graceless beauty, grey-eyed and keen,
> --Blond insolence--of his blithe visage
> Which is hard and happy.[21]

The idealization of women, which Lewis saw as the modern heritage from the courtly love tradition, also found expression in these poems. In a poem titled "As the Ruin Falls," Lewis speaks of the gentle power of love. Although he writes as a lover, he acknowledges his inability to move outside the sphere of selfishness without the help of the loved one:

> Only that now you have taught me (but how late)
> my lack.
> I see the chasm. And everything you are was
> making
> My heart into a bridge by which I might get back
> From exile, and grow man. And now the bridge is
> breaking.
>
> For this I bless you as the ruin falls. The pains
> You give me are more precious than all other gains.[22]

The poem, obviously addressed to his wife who was dangerously ill at the time of their marriage in 1957, bespeaks a recognition of the power of women and of love.

These pages are not intended to be a complete survey of all the evidences of medieval influences in Lewis' creative works. They are written simply to indicate the extent to which the interests in the Middle Ages and its literature permeated Lewis' life and writings. Others have studied this influence in his science fiction novels; I have suggested that it should also be considered in reading his children's stories and his poetry.

Notes to Chapter VI

[1]See Charles Moorman, Arthurian Triptych: Mythic Materials in Charles Williams, C. S. Lewis, and T. S. Eliot (Berkeley, California, 1960), pp. 102-127; Marjorie Wright, "The Cosmic Kingdom of Myth in the Myth Philosophy of Charles Williams, C. S. Lewis, and J. R. R. Tolkien," unpub. diss. (University of Illinois, 1960), p. 150 ff; William D. Norwood Jr. "The Neo-Medieval Novels of C. S. Lewis," unpub. diss. (University of Texas, 1965).

[2]Mariann B. Russell, "The Idea of the City of God," unpub. diss. (Columbia University, 1965).

[3]"On Three Ways of Writing for Children," Of Other Worlds, pp. 26-27. The essay by Tolkien referred to in the quotation is reprinted in the collection Essays Presented to Charles Williams, pp. 38-89.

The Chronicles of Narnia are: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe: A Story for Children (New York, 1950); Prince Caspian: The Return to Narnia (New York, 1951); The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader" (New York, 1952); The Silver Chair (New York, 1953); The Horse and His Boy (New York, 1954); The Magician's Nephew (New York, 1955); The Last Battle: A Story for Children (New York, 1956).

[4]The Magician's Nephew, p. 103.

[5]The Last Battle, pp. 147-149.

[6]The Last Battle, pp. 160-161.

[7]Prince Caspian, p. 114.

[8]Letters, p. 283.

[9]The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, pp. 132-133.

[10]Allegory of Love, p. 46.

[11]See "A Bestiary," An Old English Miscellany containing A Bestiary, Kentish Sermons, Proverbs of Alfred, Religious Poems of the thirteenth century, ed. Richard Morris (London, 1872), pp. 1-2.

[12]The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, p. 101.

[13]The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader," pp. 205-206.

[14]The Silver Chair, p. 21.

[15]London, 1919.

[16]London, 1926.

[17]New York, 1964.

[18]Spirits in Bondage, pp. 78-79.

[19]"Victory," Spirits in Bondage, p. 16.

[20]"Death in Battle," Spirits in Bondage, p. 106.

[21]"The Planets," Poems, pp. 12-14. This description of the planet Mars also governed the quality assigned it in Lewis' novel, Out of the Silent Planet.

[22]"As the Ruin Falls," Poems, pp. 109-110.

VII. CONCLUSION

In this study I have traced the interest of a critic of medieval literature, a critic who began his career at Oxford by pronouncing an unexpected curse on certain kinds of knowledge with the exclamation, "Why--damn it--it's medieval, ..."[1] The same man, at the end of his career, came to regard the ethos and literature of the Middle Ages as a broad universal stream which flowed on in ordered exuberance. The paradox implied in the phrase, "ordered exuberance," seems to suggest the universal appeal which Lewis found in the Middle Ages, both in its ordered harmony and its imaginative freedom. Like his hero John in The Pilgrim's Regress, as he turned back to the former time to escape the enervating narrowness of the modern age, he found in the ethos and the literature of that age a universal value.

The results of Lewis' consideration of medieval literature are several. One is implied in the title given to the Chair established for Lewis at Cambridge University, Professor of Mediaeval and Renaissance English. The union of medieval and Renaissance is one which Lewis defended in several of his major critical works. He was not, of course, the first to deny that a division exists between the two periods.[2] However, his denial was based upon a conviction that the universal power of the Middle Ages did not come to be questioned until a period much later than the one

traditionally assigned to the Renaissance. Lewis' critical writings, therefore, stress the continuity of medieval interests until more recent times, the continuity of the allegorical mode, of the courtly love tradition, and of the romantic imagination. In contrast to some other scholars who denied the importance or the existence of the historical Renaissance, Lewis did not seek to push Renaissance habits or interests back into the Middle Ages. Instead he stretches the habits of thought and literary interests of the Middle Ages forward so that they reach almost to modern times.[3]

The most important statement of the relationship between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance is found in his inaugural lecture at Cambridge, "De Descriptione Temporum." Here he describes the barrier between the two periods as ". . . largely a figure of Humanist propaganda."[4] Thus he can proceed to a more important question, "If we do not put the Great Divide between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, where should we put it?"[5] His answer is in that period when the machine came to be a dominating force in the life of man, when man came to regard progress as inevitable and the machine as the mode of progress. These developments separate everything since the early nineteenth century from the preceding epochs, a time which Lewis calls "Old Western Culture." Although he does not explicitly describe the distinguishing characteristics of

this earlier period, there is at least one mark which may be deduced negatively, by its absence in modern times. The life of the individual man then was ordered by a rhythm which flowed on rather than progressed. The ethos and the literature of Old Western Culture assumed that both man and life had begun with a value, which did not necessarily improve with age. Lewis expresses concern that, in the modern period, the machine and the inevitability of progress have superseded the humane universal values of Old Western Culture.

In the preceding chapters, I have suggested that Lewis' contribution to medieval studies in the twentieth century was governed by a similar concern for humane values. Most often, Lewis was concerned that his readers be able to respond to the rich and various appeals of medieval literature. He accomplished this purpose not mainly by pursuing narrowly academic excursions into image counting or source hunting, but by demonstrating the universality of the appeal of medieval literature, encrusted though it may be in modern times. Lewis was everywhere concerned with making his readers fully human in their response to literature, by supplying the lost aesthetic response to the "medieval model," or by reinvigorating the power of the romantic imagination for our times. A reader of Lewis' writings soon recognizes that he is in partnership with a critic who always remembers

his presence and his special problems. The contribution of C. S. Lewis to the appreciation of medieval literature is one which places him in the broadly humanistic tradition of literary criticism; it is a contribution which justifies his title, the humane medievalist.

Notes to Chapter VII

[1]*Surprised by Joy*, p. 206.

[2]See, for example, Wallace K. Ferguson, "The Revolt of the Medievalists," *The Renaissance in Historical Thought: Five Centuries of Interpretation* (Boston, 1948), pp. 329-385; and Harry Levin, "English Literature of the Renaissance," *The Renaissance: A Reconsideration of the Theories and Interpretations of the Age*, ed. Tinsley Helton (Madison, Wisconsin, 1961), pp. 125-151.

[3]See John Lawlor, ed., *Patterns of Love and Courtesy: Essays in Memory of C. S. Lewis* (Evanston, Illinois, 1966), for further clarification of Lewis' criticism of medieval literature.

[4]*They Asked for a Paper*, p. 10.

[5]*They Asked for a Paper*, p. 11.

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